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Things Mundane

AS OBSERVED BY



Evan R. Chesterman



★ PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY

MAR 28 1913

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THINGS MUNDANE

**AS OBSERVED BY
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THINGS MUNDANE

AS OBSERVED BY



EVAN R. CHESTERMAN



NEW YORK

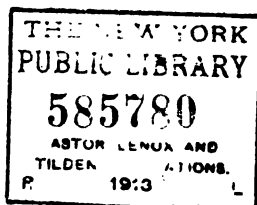
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PREFACE

To those who may perchance be interested, it might be well to explain that this volume represents, in part, the work of a newspaper man "off duty," who found a certain relief in forgetting the more serious or tragic sides of life.

The "letters" here offered, as well as several hundred of like nature, appeared some years ago in the Sunday issues of the now defunct *Richmond Dispatch* and in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

All the articles bear on what the poet Horace calls the "*res angusta domi*"—the narrowed circumstances at home—and all, when originally printed, appeared over the nom de plume "The Idle Reporter."

The author has purposely sought, wherever possible, to use the colloquial speech of middle-class Virginians and he has not hesitated to give even the double negative some recognition. It is far from his purpose to intimate that Virginians speak more incorrectly than other people, but he believes that the language of emotion, wherever employed,

is more vigorous than grammatical. And then, too, correct English "comes hard" even to veterans of the pen.

In every real home—that is, every home with any semblance of happiness—there must be a woman. The presiding genius of the Idle Reporter's fireside, by virtue of her executive ability, is variously mentioned as the "Commander-in-Chief" and the "Queen Bee." She is depicted as vigorous, resourceful, thrifty, altogether inconsistent, and at times belligerent. Few have made a heroine of the conventionally self-sacrificing married woman with a brood of children. The author, therefore, is proud to be among the first to do her typographical reverence.

In a way, let it be confessed that these "letters" are autobiographical. Many of the trivial incidents related actually occurred in the Idle Reporter's home. And hence to him, at least, they are important since they recall those near and dear to him.

But the descriptions applied to the Commander-in-Chief are far from photographic. Let it rather be said that they are antithetical. In real life she is the soul of gentle indulgence and though she lacks the thirteen children of the text, she has

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thirteen times thirteen lovable qualities not attributed to the fictitious Commander-in-Chief.

As for what the author says about himself in the newspaper articles—well, there are those who slyly insist that where he describes a peevish, irritable husband and father, he paints a portrait startlingly like himself.

EVAN R. CHESTERMAN.

Richmond, Va.,
October 4, 1912.

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THINGS MUNDANE

E PLURIBUS UNUM

THE hen with one chick has long been held up as a paragon of maternal solicitude, and though sometimes mildly censured for overzeal in the matter of motherly care and prudence, nobody condemns her severely for any radical shortcomings.

She gets all the glory she deserves, and that, too, with mighty little scratching.

But it seems to me 'tis time for her to step aside and allow a few honors for the patient "Dominickers" with larger broods—the ragged fowls who rear thirteen or fourteen fluffy midgets from downy infancy to respectable rooster and pullethood.

The love of the hen with one chick is truly great, I admit, but don't you know, good people, that it's expansive and readily spreads out to meet the demands of an increased family.

Verily maternal affection is like one's capacity for home-made chocolate caramels: there's no limit to it.

As a practical married man, "with encumbrances," I know whereof I speak. Some people —Heaven knows they are narrow-minded—might say that our crop of youngsters has grown into superfluosness; but, bless your soul, we love each additional brat just as if he were the only babe on earth, and was absolutely necessary for the perpetuation of the human race.

And can't you understand, too, that these family accessions steal nothing from the affection bestowed on the children who antedate the "baby"? They all—all—come in for their share of parental regard, and we wouldn't part with one for yellow gold.

* * *

There ain't that man on earth that could stay in our house a month and then tell which of the "stepping stones" the Commander-in-Chief loves best.

She has every toeache of the whole brood scheduled, and what is more, upon getting up each morning, she includes in her calculations a certain number of accidents which are bound to occur before the day is over.

For instance, when reveille is sounded at six o'clock, she sketches off in the surgical department

of her active mind the following certain, unavoidable mishaps: Bumped heads, eight; violent falls, six; cut fingers, three; stumped toes, nine; burnt fingers, sixteen; bruises from fights, four; pins and matches swallowed by crawling, creeping contingent, sixteen; and so on through the whole blood curdling gamut.

And then she allows twenty-five per cent. more for unexpected and hitherto unforeseen accidents, which only the ingenuity and fiendishness of children can bring about.

It is concerning this unclassified list of accidents that I wish to speak, and the incident I relate, besides showing the solicitude of a hen with one plus twelve chicks, will also show that a mother's mind is never off her little ones.

It came about in this way: The folks up in Hanover wrote asking us to send our first-born, little Grover Cleveland, up to them, so that he could spend a week or two shooting Molly Cottontails and enjoying the country life.

Pa imprudently suggested that the brat could use his shotgun—a suggestion which, of course, set the boy wild with delight.

But the Commander-in-Chief had her doubts.

She didn't like that shotgun business. Wouldn't a gravel-shooter do as well? she asked.

And, of course, Grover scoffed at the idea.

Then the nervous maternal Dominicker of our modest roost suggested that he use a toy gun, which merely shoots sticks.

Grover repudiated the idea with scorn. No indeed! he had to shoot that shotgun. He knew it would make him a hero in the neighborhood for months with all the other puerile imps.

* * *

Between us gals, I didn't like that shotgun business much myself, but, being as the good woman opposed it, I, of course, had to take the opposite view.

"Let the boy learn to shoot," I said sassily, but deep down in my heart, I had some mighty serious misgivings.

Yet, when the Lightning-Stocking Darner insisted on cutting out the shotgun feature of the programme, some irresistible devil of contentiousness made me plead for the weapon.

And so the young rascal went off to Hanover with a thousand suggestions and a thousand warnings from his mother, not to mention the mutton suet in his satchel and the glycerine for his chapped hands, and the cough drops for his cold,

and the extra suit of underwear for raw days, and all those other things which only a mother with many, many little ones thinks to provide.

Now, anybody with a short crop of children would swear we oughtn't to have missed that brat, but, daggone my buttons, if things didn't get kinder lonesome before he had gone a mile.

When I'd come home to dinner the house would seem that lonesome, with just the other twelve "chilluns," that I'd get positively timorous and nervous.

And the Commander-in-Chief kept saying she missed the boy every minute, and that she'd walk on hot irons before she'd ever let another child of hers go where there was a shotgun on the place.

And every time she'd drift into that direction, the fidgets would seize me, and I'd try to eat up my pipe-stem or wriggle through my chair.

Each day we mourned that boy more and more, and finally it seemed to me that the place waiting for him at home got bigger than the house itself, and that the town would have to suspend business until he came back.

And, mind you, he was just one of thirteen, and the Lord knows the others ain't no second-class children, either.

But, my! the Queen Bee was snappish when the maternal yearnings for that urchin began to assert themselves, and the longing for his sore toes and chapped hands pulled at her heart-strings.

But the crisis came at last. And ah, such a crisis! The dagger thrust is deep in my soul to-day, and that, too, despite the fact that I have to count the other youngsters on my fingers to make an accurate list of them.

* * *

I had gone down to the office feeling monstrous lonesome that day, and somehow work was as loathsome as fighting off toothache with Christian fortitude.

The hours dragged by with leaden feet, and toward noon I was ready to drop. Yes, almost ready, but the nervous ringing of the telephone bell made me leap like a flash of lightning. Instinct told me by the way the bell rang that trouble was brewing.

The receiver was up to my ear in the twinkling of an eye, and a second later the whole truth flashed upon me.

It was just a broken woman's voice that greeted me and it told a story I already knew.

"A telegram has come," it said. "You know the rest—the shotgun."

A practical mortal would have demanded further information. Not I. People are practical in books.

"One of the precious thirteen gone," tolled the bell that rang in my imagination, "and it's all your fault."

Yes, one of the thirteen; but ask the millionaire if he suffers when he loses one of his thirteen hundred thousand. And is parental love less greedy?

* * *

When I reached the house which erst had known the sunshine of little Grover's presence, I found a commotion that would have demoralized a man of steel.

The cook was bellowing with distress, and the leather-colored house-girl was wringing her hands in mental anguish, though only a few days before they had both interdicted Grover from the kitchen.

And up-stairs in the nursery were the surviving twelve, bunched together around the Queen Bee, who stood dry-eyed and benumbed, with her nose

a hopeless, unforgivable red, and her throat choking with sobs.

Ugly, did you say! No, beautiful as Helen of Troy was this woman as she stood in the sheen of her stately motherhood, encircled by her terrified fledgelings.

Instinct had sent the frightened brood a-flying to her side, and one and all were clinging to her skirts and sniffing and whimpering and wiping their little noses on their sleeves, and crying as if their very hearts would break.

But the red-nosed woman was a goddess sublime, who arose transcendent above the panic-stricken group.

And I stood there, a hopeless, heavy, paralytic gump, and wondered, despite the excitement, if all the blame would fall on me.

But the woman did not scold, and when she spoke, it was only to say: "The fault is mine—mine, and mine alone."

And then I swallowed at all sorts of lumps in my throat and could only ask, "Where is my pipe?"

Thus we stood—a tableau vivant—with anguish in the foreground and sorrow brooding black in the very atmosphere.

By and by, when two or three volumes of tobacco smoke had gone into my neck, I rallied and screwed up the courage to ask in awed tones, "How did it happen?" "The gun, the gun," wailed the mother. "My poor little boy—my darling little boy—my boy that never forgot his Ma. Why did I let him go to that gun?"

* * *

There was not in my soul the courage required for the asking of the next question.

It should be evaded to the bitter end, and so I simply said: "Let me see the telegram."

"There it is—there it is on the mantel," moaned the Dominicker with the surviving twelve. "I HAVEN'T OPENED IT YET."

"Haven't opened it yet?" I thundered, with the impulse of a sudden joy, "haven't opened it, did you say? Then how in the name of the high heavens do you know the boy is—"

But here the sun broke through the nimbus clouds of our sorrow. Hope flashed like a meteor through our minds. I seized the awful yellow missive, tore it asunder and read:

NEW YORK, February 18.

"Will ship you tan Raglan Cloak, thirteen dollars, twenty-nine and one-half cents, C. O. D.

"GUGGENHEIMER, KLOTZ & Co."

"Oh! it's about that cloak I ordered, is it?" explained the good woman, as if awakening from a long, long sleep. "Well, who'd have thought it? The thing nearly scared me into fits."

Whereupon the mother of the brood burst into hysterics and sobbed as if her heart would break, and called for smelling salts and lit into me like a wildcat for allowing the boy to leave us.

"It was all your hard-headed doings," she vociferated, "and you know telegrams throw me into spasms of fright."

"But I had nothing to do with that telegram," I replied, now hopping mad. "It's addressed to you and signed by some Knickerbocker gentry from whom you evidently contemplated buying drygoods."

"Of course you had nothing to do with the telegram," she snapped out, "but who was it, save you, that insisted on Grover's leaving, and got me that nervous and worked up about the gun that I didn't know A from izzard?"

"Who was it, I say," repeated the rapidly reviving dame, "that wrought me up until the very sight of a telegraph boy made me fainty? I didn't have to open the message to know what was in it. A mother's instinct told me."

The idea that we were arguing in a circle soaked into my head without further loss of time, and I forthwith returned to work. But we had that boy Grover back at home by the next train.

He brought back with him eight squirrel skins, six dead rabbits, and a live possum not to mention several pockets full of persimmons. And he's a hero in the eyes of every urchin for blocks around.

HIS TONGUE FROZEN

PA is down from Hanover visiting me. The old gentleman is well on in the eighties, but he's hale and hearty, though he surely does grow more "aggravating" every day. When people get far advanced in years they show all kinds of little peculiarities, and if you ain't used to 'em, they'll worry you to death. Now the old gentleman enjoys the distinction of being "the oldest inhabitant" up in the county, and when he comes to Richmond he sees nothing so wonderful that he cannot duplicate it from his boundless store of personal reminiscences.

Folks say Pa looks like me, though I thank the Lord that I haven't got his "ways." A kindly light peeps from his goose-blue eyes, which peer out from a lemon-colored fringe that overhangs them, and his storm-beaten nose is ever ruddy and glowing. He has never gotten gray, for his hair and whiskers are sand-colored, and in cold weather when the spray freezes on the latter, his hirsute appendage looks like broom-straw with frost on it. His neck per-

petually exhibits the redness which suggests sirloin beefsteak. And on his honest hands there are callous spots and horny protuberances which indicate a life of toil. Several of his fingers look as if they had been mashed with a hammer and afterward became ossified. Pa never did shy at work 'ception at Christmas times and just before elections, or when fish were biting or rabbits were "using" around in the slashes, or the weather got hot or something of that sort.

As I have said, he is the grand repository of reminiscences and they say he holds down the job of "oldest inhabitant" better than any man who ever graced Hanover county. It is my private opinion that nothing ever happened in the United States without first arranging to have Pa on the scene of action. If the old gentleman failed to put in his appearance, the anticipated event was postponed or postponed itself. In 1840 three terrific tornadoes, calculated to do untold damage to all sections of the state, abstained from occurring because Pa had gone down to Mississippi at the time to buy some niggers. A year later a frightful earthquake, far worse than that disastrous phenomenon which occurred at Lisbon, failed to show up because at the time the

old gentleman was sick in Goochland with chills and fever. It should be said in justice to my reminiscent parent, however, that the sickness which at that time disabled him was the worst epidemic of its kind ever known in Goochland. People talk about it to this day. Pa is said to have had the disease in its most virulent form, and his name will go down in the annals of Goochland county. He was here in Richmond when cholera prevailed in the city and likewise became prominent during a smallpox scare which terrorized the town. Many years ago, when he visited New Orleans, the inhabitants of that place arranged a yellow fever epidemic, the memory of which is to this day a nightmare. Other yellow fever epidemics have struggled hard to make a name for themselves, but Pa sweeps them all aside with a contemptuous wave of his freckled, callous-spotted, ossified hand and says they were mere burlesques.

* * *

When the old gentleman came to see me the other day he brought a bag of scalybarks, a string of partridges, some chitterlings, three pounds of country sausage and a coonskin for the children. His appearance was a signal for juvenile excite-

ment at home. The children think he beats Santa Claus all to hollow, for Santa Claus never gets a chance to talk, whereas Pa never gives anybody else a chance to wedge in a word edgeways. After the old man had cleared his throat with a noise that almost took the roof off the house and had expectorated in a rose jar which he mistook for a cuspidor, he unwound a woollen muffler from his neck, took off his wrist warmers, and sat down in a velvet plush chair which was intended solely for ornament and not for utility. Then, realizing that his massive, peg-soled boots were muddy, he took from his pocket a one-pound jack-knife and scraped the mud from their soles on our Brussels carpet. When this operation had been concluded, he swept the whole house and the surrounding perspective with one of those silent, searching, penetrating, all-comprehending glances which rural citizens so frequently bestow on their environments when in town. By this time he was thoroughly comfortable and when he felt the genial warmth of our register, which failed to disclose the Latrobe stove beneath, he remarked in an oracular tone: "We're going to have an early spring. I told Buck [a rural neighbor] so last week, but he's that bull-headed and mulish

that he argued agin the proposition for an hour."

That night the thermometer fell eighteen degrees.

* * *

When Pa came down-stairs next day at half-past four o'clock he looked blue under the gills, so the servants said, and after he had knocked around for four hours he got so bored he actually went out in the back yard and chopped wood. The truth of the matter was the old gentleman dropped in on us so suddenly that we had to make up his bed without the feather mattress or the log cabin quilt. It's a wonder he didn't freeze, but at any rate he never murmured. True he was very sarcastic about the late hour we had breakfast and ate like a horse, but otherwise he was perfectly natural. I remarked on the intense cold and he scoffed at the suggestion. "When I was a boy we went barefooted on days like this," he sententiously remarked. "Why man, minnows will be bitin' soon. I'm mighty 'fraid about them pesky fruit trees, though. They'll be a-bloomin' and a-buddin' in a day or so, and some late frost'll ketch 'em. Darn early springs, anyhow." And hereupon he lapsed into reminiscences and cited an instance of one spring

in Hanover that was so premature that it came twelve months ahead of time and happened to strike right in the midst of a spring that was perfectly regular in its schedule. In fact, no trouble at all would have occurred save that in the following year there was no spring season at all, and the people stepped right out of their winter clothes into a Fourth of July perspiration.

"That spring's like a watch I've got, Pa," I remarked; "when it's twelve hours fast or slow, the irregularity doesn't bother me in the least." The old gentleman was too chuckleheaded to see any point of resemblance between my watch and the tale he told, and he treated me in a most contemptuous manner.

And the thermometer kept falling, though every time Pa would draw near the register he swore we were going to have an early spring and insulted all who took issue with him.

When the children, with chapped faces, croupy, rattling chests and frost-bitten fingers, ran in and told us that the thermometer had gotten to five points above zero, Pa said that it was fine weather for brats—that their Ma ought to take off their shoes and let them go wading, that it was just the kind of day he used to select for going into

the fields after buttercups when a little shaver.

Excusin' that section of the Constitution of the United States which requires us to honor our father and our mother, I could have shook Pa, he was so pig-headed about the weather.

* * *

Everybody that came into the house talked about the immense fall in the temperature and these remarks, instead of shaking the old man's convictions, only made him firmer in his predictions about an early spring. The only concession he made in the face of this mass of cumulative evidence against him was to unwind another reminiscence. He told of a cold spell in the early 'thirties when he attended a certain funeral. The temperature, he said, was so low that the tears froze in the eyes of the bereaved family and pattered like hailstones on the grave of the deceased. They had to blast out a hole in the ground with gunpowder before they could find a suitable place for the coffin.

"That's a good one, Pa," I said, "but I reckon if your lamented friend was as mean a boy as you say you were, they've pretty well-nigh thawed him out by now."

And the next day it snowed.

When the first flakes fell the old gentleman was like Alexander sighing for more worlds to conquer. He said the falling weather was a dead sure sign of an early spring. He even refused to argue the question any more. He likewise refused to observe that our thermometer had gone down a rathole—it was so low.

And it kept on snowing.

When the storm had lasted all day, Pa said he knew his fruit trees would be blooming by the following Sunday. The snow made him reminiscent, and he told of other trifling snows which, while most serious in their amateurish way, were as nothing in comparison with one great blizzard, the details of which he kept in reserve. Pa complained of rheumatism when he went to bed that night at half-past seven o'clock and attributed it to the humidity in the vernal atmosphere.

The thermometer was then four degrees above zero. And it still snowed.

* * *

The next day when the old gentleman arose at five o'clock he must have secretly felt some surprise at seeing the "fleecy element" still on a rampage; but if he did, he never let on. He was

as complacent at breakfast as if nothing unusual was happening. Once he remarked that we kept the house too hot for this season of the year, but he didn't try to cool off by unbuttoning his vest or eating in his shirt sleeves as he does in the summer. When I came up from down town that night, I said: "Well, Pa, the oldest inhabitants tell me this is the worst weather they have ever run across. I suppose you'll be eating June apples next week, won't you?"

The old man kept his temper and then, in a most forgiving spirit, he magnanimously told us one of his most cherished secrets—a secret he had been keeping back for two days, the details of the great snow storm of '57. In comparison with that blizzard, the storm we discussed sank into utter, hopeless insignificance. We felt like telling the snow to stop trying, but it kept on just the same. Pa said he really thought this snow storm, which excited us so much, at least deserved recognition as it served to give a vague, indistinct idea of what the tempest of '57 had been.

That night the old man got to bed by seven o'clock, and his room was cold enough to freeze the horns off a brass monkey. Ice formed in the pitcher and the bed wouldn't have thawed out

in a furnace. Pa made smoke when he breathed and his chin quivered so that we thought his whiskers would fall out by the roots, but he jumped in and never murmured.

And still it snowed and got colder.

About midnight, just as we had screwed up the courage to take off our clothes and start to bed, we heard Pa bellowing like a bull.

We rushed up to his room and found him buried beneath rugs, pillows, carpets, and almost every other available object in the room. "I'm freezin', I'm freezin'," he howled; "this darned weather beats the winter of '57. Get me a hot brick—quick, quick, quick!"

When we thought we had warmed him up a little he turned to me and said: "Son, got any liquor? I want to thaw out some icicles inside me. And while you are down thar in the smoke-house or wherever you keeps it, get me some red pepper pods to chew on, or something fiery."

"Yes, Pa," I said, "and I guess by the time I return, spring radishes will be sprouting. Wouldn't you like a few of them?"

"Darn your hide," he bellowed, "haven't I been a-fighting tooth and nail for three days a-trying to convince you that this was going to be

the roughest winter on record? Didn't I tell you what the goose bone said and how the scaly-barks were growin' and what the fur-bearin' 'varmint' indicated? Git out of this room, you hard-headed, dod-blasted nuthin', you. You never would take my advice, anyhow."

I let it go at that, but Pa ain't what he used to be since that snow fell.

HANDED LEMONS TO A HATED ENEMY

Not since the day when that amiable busy-body, the Commander-in-Chief, accidentally froze a mouse in our ice-cream freezer and unwittingly served the varmint in its toothsome entirety to our dearly beloved Baptist pastor, has the cheerful sinner now writing chuckled so much as he did last week, when a still queerer accident befell our household.

What was the accident, you ask? Well, wait and see. No writer with the dramatic instinct will work off his climax in the second paragraph of his stuff. He keeps ducking with it so as to hold the reader spellbound through expectancy.

That was the plan followed by Dr. Laurence Sterne, the author of "Tristram Shandy," the dullest book on earth, barring the list of sixty recommended for a five-foot shelf by Dr. Eliot, of Harvard.

But to return to the Commander-in-Chief, alias the Queen Bee: What tickled me about the catastrophe in question was the fact that it meant my emancipation—not emancipation from this Na-

poleon in petticoats, but from an obnoxious and tyrannical vegetable politely called a rubber-plant.

Now every well-regulated, long-married, and properly subdued husband, who talks fiercely at men's meetings but shrinks to the size of a busted toy balloon in his wife's presence, knows that there is no happy home without a rubber-plant.

Not that the rubber-plant in itself makes the home any happier, but that its presence at least betokens that strict observance of conventionality which is construed to mean domestic happiness.

* * *

Our rubber-plant—yes, I might as well gleefully say in the beginning, our late lamented rubber-plant—was neither any better nor any worse than the generality of these household pests. It was a stiff-necked, offish thing that consistently promised year after year to burgeon forth like a green bay-tree, but invariably wound up by producing only eight new leaves per annum.

This king of vegetable "flourflushers" had no more gratitude or affection than a tomcat, but its thirst was something awful. The late lamented indeed could lap up water like a man on the bil-

ious morning after a joyous night out. Although it dominated our house in a jardinière twelve inches in diameter, the plant and its surrounding earth could gurgle down all the water contained in a tub eighteen inches in diameter and still look dusty.

Yours truly had to help the thing tank up. Toting liquid refreshments to a circus elephant (one of my most strenuous puerile achievements) was like pushing pins compared to serving the thirst-cure to our verdant nuisance. If the heavens lowered or the horizon scowled with a dark cloud, there came to me a hurry call to rush down into the hall and take the thankless rubber-plant out on the front porch so it could get the rain.

Oft in the stilly night has the Queen Bee sent me bouncing up from the elysium of our corn-shuck mattress to lug the pampered nuisance out into a nocturnal shower. And in lugging the four-foot treasure its uncomplaining slave likewise had to lug ninety-eight pounds of dirt and a ponderous jardinière.

As I look back on it all now, it seems to me that Atlas holding up the world and thereby perpetually insuring the publication of his nude por-

trait on the backs of school geographies, was but as a mere wayside daisy to me.

Take, for example, the manner in which the rubber-plant came to darken my life with its sullen umbrageousness and waxen offishness. The thing was given to the Commander-in-Chief one blazing hot summer day while we were passing on the train through Bedford City with our usual kindergarten escort, let alone three country hams and a firkin of butter.

With it came the ninety-eight pounds of dirt and the pot. I had to "hist" it aboard the train, and nurse the thing all the way to Petersburg, just as if it were a fond-stricken dove. In the Cockade City it and the hams and the firkin of butter and the Queen Bee and the children all had to be "re-histed" to another train for Richmond.

When the Custodian of the rubber-plant reached his domicile he was neither singing gospel hymns nor insisting that old-time religion was good enough for him. He was that mad that he could have chewed ten-penny nails as if they were huckleberries.

And that was the way the late lamented came to cross my path and likewise to cross my life

at a period when otherwise I would have been as sweet-tempered as a well fed shoat.

* * *

But the rubber-plant is dead. Long, please, do not live its successor. Now for the climax—the how and the why it died. On a certain sultry night in flytime not many weeks ago we had “company”—a bunch of folks who dropped in and had to be fed. Mightily did the Queen Bee buzz around among the preserve jars and the cracker boxes and the water bugs to dish up the wherewithal to meet the exactions of the gullets of her “company.”

In the whirl of all the flutteration she be-thought herself of a fine internal space filler—lemonade. Mark the fact, we are approaching the climax: the god out of the machine (dramatically *deus ex machina*) who is to rescue me from my ancient tormentor rapidly approacheth.

While all the preparations for the gastric lay-out were in progress in the pantry I was holding down the “company” on the imitation velvet plush furniture in our parlor. Particularly was I devoting myself to a fresh, plump little seventeen-year-old critter from the country, when the

dulcet tones of the Commander-in-Chief bade me break away and come to her for orders.

Her command was that I water the rubber-plant—yes, quit the gal with the winesap apple cheeks and everything else and go quench the thirst of the household pest.

Prompt as I always am to obey the person whose word is law on every foot of our real estate I grabbed up the first available pitcher of liquor and shambled off to do my hourly thirst-quenching stunt.

But, alas and alack, in my feverish zeal to be obedient I little knew the murder I was about to commit. The pitcher I took contained the lemonade.

And the rubber-plant got it all—was handed not a single lemon, but the juice of several lemons, let alone the sugar and the ice.

That night at feeding time, when the guzzling bee commenced and our guests were smacking their lips over the Commander-in-Chief's damson preserves, I saw the good woman suddenly throw back her head and sniff the circumambient ether. She smelt lemonade. Then she recalled the pitcher of it which she had wrought. But why need this "guilty party" now give all the grue-

some details. The rubber-plant even then was souring on the lemonade, and the two were about to engage in a death-grapple. But the contest was not long in doubt. The ice gave my enemy the cold feet, while the acid bit into him at a hundred points.

Three days afterward I tenderly laid in our garbage barrel all that was earthy and earthy of a nuisance at which I had long hungered to aim a swift kick.

But what the Queen Bee said of the accident ain't appropriate for publication.

A TERRIBLE DISEASE

THE black death, the Asiatic cholera, and the smallpox, not to mention leprosy, epizootic, seven years' itch, and cholera infantum, are all pretty fierce diseases in their special lines of business, and, if allowed full play, will clean out anything from a stable to a kindergarten; but I have just discovered a strange malady which is far more fatal and mysterious in its workings than any of the scourges I have mentioned. It has broken out among the Commander-in-Chief and her she-cousins in a most virulent form, and is what we menfolks in the family know as antiquitis (pronounced anteeek'-e-tis), or claw-foot. There never was any other disease quite like it, and when its final symptoms appear, husbands and brothers become as panic-stricken as do villagers pending a mad-dog scare.

The tongue of the female is normal during the first stages of the disease,—that is, not pronouncing over one thousand words per minute,—the pulse regular, the respiration good, and the appetite vigorous, but the eye shows a furtive, rest-

less, excitable look which occasionally develops into a scowl when husbands are about. The subject at such times expresses deep regret about forty-five times a day because she is poor and then says in the presence of her consort that she wishes she had money "to fix up the house pretty like other women." By and by, if you carefully diagnose the case, you will observe that the patient appears deeply absorbed in an inspection of all the articles of furniture in the house, and if the tables, chairs, bureaux, chiffoniers, buffets, and so on happen to be of quartered oak, birch, or walnut, she'll emit grunts expressive of deep dissatisfaction and contempt. Then she will reiterate the assertion that everything about the place looks "poorfolksy," after which she will again sandpaper you with her tongue because you cut her weekly allowance down to such a contemptible figure.

An hour or so later you can find the victim rummaging in the lumber-room among the old broken bedsteads and discarded furniture of by-gone days, after which you will see her again gazing with contempt on the modern set of furniture you bought her year before last. This buzzing and sniffing around goes on for a week or

so, during which period the male hears many mysterious conversations about having "the old sideboard done over," and the bookcases mahoganyized, while occasionally the whispered word "claw-foot" is uttered with bated breath.

* * *

Being a mere man, you of course don't understand the signs at first, but you learn soon enough, and with your increasing knowledge come physical and mental agonies more excruciating than the effects of strychnine or ground glass. But let me illustrate the whole gruesome business by a little sketch of my own happy home before and after the claw-foot demon in mahogany entered to blast my life.

On a certain day at dinner when I saw something dangerous in the steely eye of the Commander-in-Chief, that good woman unloosed her cornucopia of words and said into my shell-like ear; "Dear, I'm going to have my old sideboard done over, and when the antique furniture man gets through with it, you won't know the thing."

"What old sideboard?" I blurted out. "You don't mean that old thing in the coal house, do you,—the one the kittens were born in?"

"Yes, that's the one," quoth she, getting play-

ful like a lambkin. "A man was here to-day and he said it would make up beautifully after he had put on brass handles and rubbed up the mahogany. And he nearly went crazy when he saw its claw-feet. Would you believe it?—he offered me forty dollars for it."

"Why didn't you throw him down and sit on him," I exclaimed, "until I could get home and clinch the bargain? I suppose he wanted it for firewood while the coal miners' pick-axes, like the preachers on vacation, are taking a much needed rest."

"Wanted it for fire-wood the cat's foot!" snorted the remorseless dispenser of my cash. "Hump! He wanted it because he knows every woman in town would give him one hundred and fifty dollars for it."

"Every woman in town give one hundred and fifty dollars for it!" I yelled, "why let's go out and hold up a whole remnant counter of them with it, like Jessie James used to hold up trains with a horse-pistol. Your words are sweeter than honey to me; they sound like the notes of a brass band filtering through a champagne vat while I am at the bung-hole of the vat. Say those sweet words again."

"I'll say them again, if you want," chirped the wondrous artificer of potato pies, "but let me add right here that no woman is going to get that sideboard out of this house. It's a genuine antique, claw-foot and all, and before the moon changes that thing is going to be sitting in this dining room as good as new."

* * *

To say that I was shocked, grieved, and mortified does not half express it, for I was also mystified. The sideboard had belonged to Ma before my marriage, and in buying my wedding paraphernalia I had begged and besought the Queen Bee to economize by using it instead of making me purchase a modern article, but she wouldn't hear to it. "That old-timey thing," she said, "why, it's ridiculous." And so it had been relegated to the coalhouse by her express command.

But I was hearing a different story now, and though amazed, I had enough prudence to ask how much it would cost to have the thing "done over."

"Oh, not much," she twittered; "it can be made as good as new for fifty dollars."

"Fifty what?" I screamed like a lost soul bellowing through space. "Fifty dollars for that

cat hospital, when we've got more furniture in this room now than we know what to do with? Why, I'd hypothecate my remains to a medical college for fifty dollars. And you say, too, that you could sell it for one hundred and fifty dollars! Why, throwing money to birds is like parsimony compared with this scheme of yours!"

"You leave the money part to me," soothingly said she. "I'll fix that so you'll never miss it, and when you see those claw-feet all varnished over you'll go crazy about them. Now don't be hard-headed about this little whim of mine. You at least ought to let me do the bossing at home sometimes,"—with an insulting emphasis on the "sometimes."

And so it came to pass that the wooden Rip Van Winkle was resurrected from its long sleep, massaged, lubricated, washed, dressed, and rejuvenated by the mechanical osteopath with the glue-pot until it emerged from the repair shop a veritable thing of beauty,—that is, as measured by the standards of beauty set by the Commander-in-Chief and her she-cousins. To my crude, uncultured eye, the thing looks as if it is suffering from a tight corset and legs unfit for golf stockings; but my views don't count.

Women have been coming to my house ever since the thing was born again. They bow down before it like the Egyptians bowed before the sacred bull Apis, and I don't believe there is a blessed one of them that wouldn't consider it a special privilege to have their backs scratched by its claw-feet. The whole business is as weird and as uncanny as an Indian ghost dance.

* * *

But the sad story of my life doesn't end here. Having an antique mahogany sideboard is like owning a silk hat. You have to buy other things to match it. The little but expensive incident I have related was but the beginning—the first act of a tragedy so full of pathos that it would make the play of Romeo and Juliet read like a comedy.

After the mahogany Rip Van Winkle had been properly installed and a due amount of incense burnt in front of it, the eye of the Queen Bee again began to get shifty at mealtimes. Then she wrinkled her forehead until it looked like a can of fishing worms and said: "Dear, I'm going to sell these tacky old oak chairs and use the money to buy mahogany chairs. The ones I intend getting will match the sideboard beautifully."

"How do the proposed new chairs match my pocketbook?" I sagely asked.

"Oh, that's all right—all hunkeydory," she merrily replied. "I can sell these oak chairs for six dollars and by putting thirty dollars more on to that sum, I can find just the thing I want—in fact, I have my eye on it now."

"The wind bloweth where it listeth," said I in despair. "Do as thou wilt, O patient Griselda! Money is no object to me, especially when all I have is gone, and what you now buy will come out of other people's pockets."

And so the mahogany chairs came marching up—six cold, stiff-backed, black-looking Puritanical things that appeared as if they needed artificial hips. The most wicked man on earth could look at those chairs and see that they were of previous chaste character. Why, they would have been embarrassed had you spoken of their "legs" instead of "limbs." But my! they were—and still are—uncomfortable. I beg the Commander-in-Chief every day to let me sit on an inverted soap-box while eating my meals, but she is obdurate.

* * *

After that, the good woman spent hours every day nosing around town in out-of-the-way places

looking for antique things of every description. One day she'd come home with cankered old brass candlesticks and the next day she'd buy a broken-nosed pitcher with a gilt handle and painted with a bunch of flowers that suggested a wall-paper design. Then she'd bob up with all sorts of spindle-legged, large-stomached things in the way of escritaires and china-presses which looked like Brownies. Some had glass knobs to them while others were adorned with brass rings or dilapidated mirrors. But the most worshiped of all the curios invariably had claw-feet—feet that looked as if they might have adorned some antediluvian Saurian or prehistoric Shanghai rooster.

Bravely I stood it all until the petticoated victim of antiquities had a tester bed hauled up in a dray. A tester bed, you know, is one of those fellows that have tall posts which reach up to the ceiling and are so high above the floor that you have to use a spring-board to jump into them. I can't tell whether the thing was built merely to support mosquito netting or to train circus athletes. Since I've been sleeping in it I feel like a cliff dweller, and if perchance I were to fall out of the bed, it would take all my poor relations to

pick up the pieces. The Commander-in-Chief climbs up into it by standing on the top of her sewing machine.

* * *

And so, to sum things up, we are as unhappy and as uncomfortable as the wildest expenditure of money could make one, but we are thoroughly antique. If Julius Cæsar or William Rufus or Lady Jane Grey or Queen Elizabeth or any of those old-timers were to drop in on us, they would feel thoroughly at home when once they got inside the house, for we "hark back" to ancient days. And to add to the external effect, I am thinking of transforming our gutter into a moat and building a drawbridge across our sidewalk! Verily I believe that all we need is an antique baby—an infant that has undergone several centuries of suspended animation and has claw-feet. Possibly, too, the medallions of a few pre-Adamite ancestors might add to the tone of the family.

The Queen Bee and her she-cousins are "tickled to death" over it all, and every time they discover a particularly venerable-looking sconce or candelabrum or grandfather's clock or cabinet or anything that is cobwebby and uncomfortable, they forthwith ship it up home. They quite overlook

the fact that most of these antiques have been made in Hoboken, N. J., or some such place, within the last twelve months.

Oh! it is horrible to contemplate, but I crack an occasional joke about it just the same. Only yesterday I said to the Commander-in-Chief in my cunning, cute little way: "Dear, do you know what I would do if you were called away from me? I would hike it right across to Egypt and get me a real, well-cured mummy for a wife—one with claw-feet, too."

"Yes," she snapped out, "and from my own exasperating experiences I can testify that the mummy with the claw-feet will get a man whose every-day actions have long since convinced me that he has cloven hoofs."

"ALL DAY MEETIN'S" IN THE COUNTRY

LEWISTON, VA., Aug. 27.—Dear Editor: If the folks in Spottsylvania county aren't good by now, there's no hope for 'em, and they'd better surrender to old Nick without another struggle.

Both the white and colored people have been having "all-day meetin's" recently, and if any man, woman, child, or suckling babe stayed away from worship, he, she, or it must have been hidden pretty deep in the hayricks, for verily it looked to me as if the whole population went to church.

Religion hereabouts is everything and what's better still, it appears in the form of practical piety and evokes a degree of reverence which ought to delight the souls of the clergy.

At both the white and colored meeting places, despite the vast crowds, the dust, the fly-bitten, thirsty horses, the unregenerate hound dogs, and the oceans of food for recess time, I saw nothing in the slightest degree disorderly or flippant.

The nearest approach to sensationalism during the meetings occurred last Sunday at old Waller's Church, founded in 1769, when a worthy citizen

inadvertently tied his team of mules over the domicile of an exclusive set of yellow jackets. During the services the mules and the insects got together—not in a spirit of brotherly love, but after the manner of the Muscovites and their Oriental opponents. The “little yellow fellows” soon won all the strategic points and made such effective attacks that the air became charged with the most unholy asinine brayings.

Any one who fancies that a mule will uncomplainingly suffer in silence needs only to give the animal a letter of introduction to a yellow jackets’ nest and his mind will quickly be disabused of the erroneous impression.

It is fitting at this juncture, too, that I should tether my Pegasus for a moment in the sassafras brush of my barren imagination and pause to place a laurel chaplet on the hairless scalps of the Spottsylvania babies—or at least that portion of them who go to church.

The infants in this vicinity—and the crop has been a splendid one this year—are nothing if not angelic when they attend protracted meetin’. Equipped as they are with gutta-percha “tum-tums” and zinc digestions, they easily withstand the pie, pickle, country ham, shoat, chine, and

chicken gizzards which come their way, and never for a moment get squirmy, whiney, or whimpery. They are good listeners and good sleepers too, and better still, absolutely fly-proof.

So far as infantile ululations are concerned, one would never know that there was a baby in the county, but as a matter of fact nearly every household keeps one. And more are expected!

The gist of the colored parson’s discourse, last week when things began to glow and the sisters were shoutin’ every minute, was that “we must be borned again.” Surely he could not have made a more potent argument in this sweet land of peace and plenty, where the period of infancy is one long, soft snap, with nothing but food and slumber and occasional flea-bites!

Were I allowed the actual, physical privilege of being “borned again” I would unquestionably elect to be a Spottsylvania baby, clothed with all the rights, privileges, and prerogatives of this favored class.

Nothing on earth so vividly illustrates the vast difference between the white and black races as their respective modes of worship. A negro church service in the country,—that is, such services as we have at protracted meetin’ season,—

is utterly beyond Caucasian powers of description. It is a whirlwind of emotion; a hurricane of pious enthusiasm; a cyclone of contrition, which, however, does not take long to dwindle down into a mere fitful zephyr of repentance after the meetings are over.

And, by the way, the "cullud br'er" is absolutely and heartlessly unconscionable in the matter of all worldly duties when it comes to attending revivals. He will unhesitatingly leave the tobacco fields of the best master when the meetings begin, and that, too, though every plant is a mass of worms and suckers. Worse still, he never announces beforehand that he intends to quit—he prefers to "turn up missing" and to stay missing until the last sinner has had his sins washed away in the creek.

But once at "protracted meetin' " he is all religion—genuine, heart-felt, soul-stirring, and soul-uplifting religion, backed by a faith that questions nothing. If this zeal could be made to go a steady gait throughout the entire year the negro would be the best man on earth.

* * *

The negro process of "getting happy" is the weirdest, strangest, most thrilling, and withal the

most pathetic thing a thinking white person could behold. It carries one completely out of the realm of civilization, yet it cannot be said that it translates the beholder to a scene of barbarism. Rather say that the whole peculiar process is mysterious and almost inexplicable. To my mind "getting happy" is possibly the blended result of negro music and negro emotionalism. One never "gets happy" until the services take on a certain rhythmic swing and the mourning sisters become inspiring with their crooning intonations. Then the volume of noise—or rather sound—begins to swell and swell and swell until it fills the whole church and the whole surrounding grove with a strange, inimitable music. By now the parson has lapsed into a metrical strain and preaches almost in blank verse, which seems to come natural to him under the excitement of the occasion. If he is a good parson,—that is to say, a good producer of shoutin's,—his body will keep time with his own intonations and possibly, if the day is comfortably warm and there's plenty of perspiration, he'll slip into a kind of circumspect jig-dancing which sets the congregation wild.

And here's where the shoutin' and the seekin' and the mournin' and the gettin' happy begins in

earnest and the leaven commences to work in the loaf. Just where you least expect it, there is a wild shriek and a dusky sister leaps into the air, gives a frantic yell and falls back stark, rigid and apparently unconscious. Willing, not to say eager hands, divest the "happy" one of her bonnet and stretch her out on the bench, where she lies in a stupor during the rest of the service. Other sisters by now are repeating the same performance in different parts of the house of worship and the very air seems electrified.

The acquisition of each individual case of "happiness" adds zest to the parson and makes him more musical, but more incoherent. And the mourning soprano—usually some old sister known for miles around—now pours forth her crooning melody unceasingly, while sedate old colored brothers add all sorts of vocal curly q's which somehow accord with wonderful harmony.

Occasionally, too, if the white heat of religious fervor begins merely to redden, the pulpit exhorter warms things up again by directing questions to his congregation,—questions which are answered in a chorus, and which quickly produce other uproarious evidences of beatitude.

So far as I could observe at the meeting I at-

tended nobody got "happy,"—that is, nobody reached the cataleptic state of religious joy,—except the adult women. The children, when touched by the "speerit," merely wept and hid their faces in their handkerchiefs. The brethren, however, were very dutiful in the matter of manipulating palm-leaf fans in the neighborhood of the swooning sisters. Indeed, one consequential old deacon seemed to be the official fanner of the church and be it said that toward the last he worked overtime.

The congregational singing of the colored folks is indescribably beautiful and utterly beyond the reach of white imitators. There's no use trying to reproduce it under artificial conditions—it won't reproduce. Sooner could the horticulturist raise wild flowers in cities or the arboriculturist make the old field pine grow on urban sidewalks.

And sweetest of all, though least exuberant, is the singing when the negro protracted meetin' ends—as it always does among the Baptists—with a whopping big baptizin' in the creek. Then, indeed, religion gets close to nature, despite the gnats and the flies and the swamp mosquitoes, and the stamping horses on the bridges, and the

belligerent hound dogs and the threatening clouds.

Country niggers are not so bad after all—leastwise they are pretty good critters when one doesn't need them in one's business and when one has got the tobacco crop well in hand and doesn't care who's elected.

* * *

White folks, as a general thing, keep their emotions to themselves when they go to all-day meetin'. No shouting for them; no "seekin'," if you please, and absolutely no such thing as "getting happy." They are a quiet, self-contained, circumspect lot—these country codgers. You don't catch them letting strangers turn any X-ray apparatuses on their think-tanks, nor do they, on the other hand, ask impertinent questions or seek to stick their worthy, sun-burned noses into your business.

But when it comes to eating they are charmingly aggressive, and if you don't at least snap up a chicken leg or so with them, they're mighty apt to think you are offish, though they'll never say so. And in the matter of food, these Spottsylvania's are kings, or rather queens, for I notice that it is the wimmen folks who have all the trouble of fixin' and preparin' the "vittles."

It is amazing, but still more delightfully thrilling, to see the vast quantities of edibles brought to all-day meetings. From all points of the compass came buggies, carriages, and wagons, and each and every one has tied behind it a big box or trunk packed and jammed with food. When the gigantic layout is spread beneath the oaks the sight is good for sore eyes, but my, it is a producer of dyspepsia!

This is the season for "pee-g," the kind of little sacrificial shoat that melts in your mouth, drips all over your face, and smears your physiognomy with irresistible grease which keeps your tongue a-licking out spang up to your eyebrows.

And forget not the pies,—the yaller, "tater" pies—a-gleaming like disks of summer sunshine and that fat and sassy that you'd eat 'em if you bust!

And the sweet pickle which you know you oughtn't to touch and which you go "long" and eat just the same as if there weren't such things as dyspepsia and grumblin' headaches in the world.

And the cakes which you don't think you can possibly squeeze into your internal omnibus, but which you do squeeze in, just the same.

And the cold tea and the cold buttermilk and the cold sweet milk.

And the cold spring or pump water with trash in it.

And the sermon after dinner.

And the way the preacher hits at the brethren in the amen corner and scatters bird-shot all around the backsliders and never touches you, who sit in a shady seat down near the door and feel that you never so much as harmed a fly in your life.

And then the breakin' up of the meetin' and the outpouring of gals in white, so sweet and pure and cool-looking that you could pin back their ears and swallow 'em whole, if some younger fellow wasn't on hand to do that act.

And the chatter of the older folks about the sermon, which is dissected paragraph by paragraph; and the re-appearance of hundreds of unhitched, but half harnessed horses from the woods nearby.

And the "Howdy-do-cousin-Jims" and the "I-hope-you-are-well-aunt-Sally's" and the hand-shaking and the grumblings about the roads and the niggers and the tobacco worms.

And the cloud of dust on the highways as the

cavalcade moves homeward; and the distant hum of voices, saying that eight hundred were at "old Waller's" at the morning service.

And the long, sweet ride at eventide through oak-girt highways and corn-fringed lanes, and over a land whose people know no malice and are ever kind and gentle and respectful and sympathetic.

Gee whillikins, 'tis bully, and if I could have my way, I'd have it all brought to town.

MERRY WHIRL OF CACKLING SPRINGS

Cackling Springs, N. W.

DEAR EDITOR: AS I am a sort of premium Shanghai at this Aracadian hennery, you will doubtless wish to give your readers some inkling of my doings, so I sit me down near the latticed summer-house at the soporiferous hour of three o'clock in the afternoon to add this incandescent contribution to your society columns.

Kindly chew the postscript up into a spitball and swallow it, for the thing contains certain details unfit for publication in a paper that will be read by my wife. That good woman is now at home unsuspectingly making blackberry preserves while I drink the mineral waters.

Were she to hear how rapidly my health is improving and what a flutter I am causing among the pullets at Cackling Springs, she would instantaneously blow in here by pneumatic tube and the mineral waters would be lashed into a creaming foam. I love my wife, but oh you little frying-sizers playing croquet out there on the lawn!

The day I choked the boss into a belief in my debilitated condition and extorted from him a leave of absence, it looked to me as if Jupiter had daubed the town blue with indigo. Never have I felt worse since the Confederate Government cut off the rations from our regiment.

Time and again I wondered if, when it was all over, the newspapers would publish a one-column cut with my "obit" on the first page. Try as hard as I could, there was no preventing myself from seeing my friends viewing my remains and from hearing Ben P. Owen remark with assumed solicitude, "Ah, don't he look natural!"

* * *

There is nothing so beneficial to a broken-down husband (whose spouse is at home making preserves) as a trip to the manless springs. Before he starts for the summer resort he may be only half a man, but once on the scene of action—or rather scene of inaction—he becomes ten men all in one.

This self-multiplying process is the inevitable result of the disparity between the male and female populations at summer resorts. And so, although I speak of myself as a premium Shang-

hai at this hennery, it is with a sort of mental reservation. In other words, there are a limited number of entries in the rooster class.

In planning to come hither, no frivolous, self-centered arrangements entered into my scheme. At no time was it my purpose to wear bows on my low-quartered shoes. Nor did I ever contemplate showing my ankles in lavender or baby-blue hose, with trousers coyly turned up. On the contrary, I did not purpose showing my ankles either with or without hose. Nor have I.

My sole object was the mineral waters and the sugar and what-yer-calls-'em that go with mineral waters. The one word in my vocabulary was Rest,—that is, a sufficiently moistened rest, with side lines in the way of Rip Van Winkle sleeps and meals such as preachers eat at their picnics.

The thought of Woman never entered my head; in fact, the thought of a woman in a peach-basket hat would be too big a thing to enter my block, which is only eight inches in diameter, after giving three inches to that excrescence known as my nose.

But here I am; and it seems to me that every whispering breeze, every tremulous leaflet, every

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droning insect, every tinkling cow-bell, and every fleecy cloud that squats on mountain top suggests the sex that cackles.

We have them here in "gorgeous profusion," and also in all the latest styles of costumery.

And this reminds me, in passing, that it is a far cry (not to say a scream) from the amply crinolined attire of the Queen Bee's girlhood days to the stick-closer-than-a-brother empire gowns which at present vex my sensitive vision and frequently cause me to strain my eyes—in an effort not to get too accurate an idea of the ladies' exact fighting weights.

Time was when one of these pullets, all dressed up, couldn't have turned around in a Pullman car; now the plumpest of 'em could skin through one of the ventilators of the coach. Ain't it a measly shame? Other day when we had a lawn party and all our be-millinered, buttoned-up-the-back, tight-as-wax fair ones were out on the lawn, I viewed them from afar. They looked like a gathering on frog stools, so immense was their head-gear and so fiercely squeezed were their bodies by their gowns. Once woman was big at the ground end, but now it's all t'other way.

* * *

As the cars bore me hither and the engine jocosely spat hot cinders in my eyes, I resolved, on reaching the hotel, to devote all my time to the oldish ladies,—that is, to the ancient white Leghorns, black Spanish, silver Hamburgs, and buff Cochin Chinas, who gossipingly hang about the whist and bridge tables and who, in point of antiquity, belong in the same chronological barn-yard with the Commander-in-Chief.

This noble resolve was based on the assumption that the pullets would have plenty of young cockerels scratching around at their heels.

But lo! I found on arriving at my point of destination that mighty few roosters, old or young, were crowing in the social coop, and that I didn't have to confine myself to the feathered antiques with the spiteful tongues. Pullets and frying-sizers in the most bewitching peek-a-boo costumes were to be seen on every side. And all were crying to be amused. Not long did it take me to preen my plumage for the functions of universal entertainer.

My rheumatics disappeared thirty minutes after a full realization of the situation, and in a week's time I had sloughed off forty burdensome years. To-day I feel almost too young to vote

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in the coming November election, and I am as frisky and sassy as little Lord Fauntleroy.

At romping and gamboling on the greensward I'm a regular hoppergrass, and if you hear some loud clucking at eventide you may know it's me calling the pullets and frying-sizers.

Time passes here with the speed of an aeroplane, but the man on the spot doesn't get the bumps that come to an aviator. I'm a bird, but not that kind. Life to me now is a grand kicking-up of my heels,—a bubbling-over of returning friskiness,—and I don't care who's elected.

Yours truly is practically the whole voting population of this place, and he favors woman's rights,—that is, rights for all of 'em except the Queen Bee. She doesn't need 'em. She'll see that nothing in trousers walks off with her Magna Charta.

* * *

Next week the proud spirit who now writes you in such exuberance may have a few feathers plucked out of him. The Appalachian Funeral Directors' Association is to hold its annual convention here, and a gay time is expected.

Its members are said to be a merry lot. No one with whom they do business has ever been

heard to complain of their work. Although it is a known fact that they have put many a fellow in a hole, it is likewise conceded that time and again they have given a lift to the chap who was down and out.

The pullets and frying-sizers, in their petting way, tell me that when the Funeral Directors come I shall have to take a back seat. They say these gents are irresistible—that there's no pulling away from them. But I, at least, shall try. When these intruders come with all their jocund paraphernalia I shall fly the coop.

The watermelon feast we had Monday night *au clair de la lune* was merry and buggy. Everybody, including the Cackling Springs insects, came. Among the most mirthful features of the evening was the attack made on me by the young and giddy alumnae of Miss Araminta Simpkin's Polite School for Misses. The alumnae of this institution bombarded me with watermelon seed, which shot slippery and wet from their dainty tapering fingers with the force of Minie balls. They,—the frivolous pullets, not the seed,—were very cunning in their respectful skylarkings, but my frock coat to-day looks as if a barrel of snails had danced the german on it.

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Please put a special delivery stamp on the money order you send. And it can't come too quick. The beetle-browed, moulting old Dominicker hen who does my laundry is on the rampage.

MASCULINE REFLECTIONS ON CHICKEN SALAD

IF things could be so arranged that I could be a woman for twenty-four hours without having to wear a hoop-skirt or one of those dresses that fasten up in the back with hooks-and-eyes, I would like mighty well to try the experiment.

But, mind you, only for twenty-four hours, and even then merely for purposes of investigation.

In other words, there's a whole lot of things about the unfathomable sex that need explaining and that never will be explained until some man actually goes through the mill.

It's no use trying to get the data by reading George Eliot and May Manton, or by watching the critters, or even by consulting your wife or your ma. The thing to do is to be one of 'em yourself and to experience the feminine sensations—to ride like a stormy petrel on the waves of joy and sorrow and fascination and delight, or to flutter through the hurricanes of jealousy and spite and chit-chat and gossip.

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Now, supposing one could be a bird of this character without having his stays laced too tight and his freedom of movement too much impaired by crinoline, it would, I repeat, be marvelously interesting to do some psychological sleuthing just to investigate the now inexplicable whys and wherefores of femininity.

Far be it from this awed and reverential student of the Daughters of Eve to say that the investigation would fail to reveal splendid traits of character on the part of those who at present serve only to mystify and dismay us.

On the contrary, it may be safely guessed that such an inquiry would disclose both splendid powers of digestion and noble attributes of mind. For example, I don't believe that any sex that can eat as much chicken salad as the ladies of my neighborhood have consumed within the last week, is altogether without physical strength and moral courage. Indeed, woman versus chicken or turkey salad, washed down with spiked lemonade and held in place by beribboned sandwiches, is one of the most mysterious propositions which lately have held me chained in amazement.

* * *

In the first place, chicken salad, like widows,

always strikes one as having an interesting past. When it comes to you well lubricated with olive oil and coyly nestling on a lettuce leaf, you can't resist it, and yet, even as you taste, you know that it is but the advance agent of a trouble bureau. It looks strangely easy to take in, yet, as you ruminate upon it, the stuff develops a weirdly elusive, rubbery, bouncing tendency, which is like unto nothing so much as the resiliency of a widow's spirits. In short, you want it and you don't want it, and when you get it you are sorry, but not half so sorry as you would be if you didn't get it.

Perhaps 'tis the subtle danger which lurks in this embalmed meat that makes it call with such a siren voice. You take an introductory nibble at the chopped celery which is the emblem of its innocence, and then, observing its innocence, you plunge deeper.

The oil makes your pathway smooth, yet the peppery condiments give you fire, while the chopped meat, though just a trifle pickled, is irresistibly seductive and monstrously hard to get by. To sum things up, you eat, and, having eaten, you awake to the awful consciousness that you have been imprudent and will not soon forget your mistake.

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This, mark you, is just a man's impression of chicken salad, and is a reminiscence of the "morning after," but think about grappling with chicken salad for six days in a week and living, not only to tell the tale but to play bridge whist after each encounter.

Reflect, too, on the strangeness not only of being able to do such things, but of being glad to do them.

And if you would have me show you a mystery still more impenetrable, I would say that wimmen-folks not only do tackle chicken salad as specified and show themselves glad to do it, but they go further, for they cheerfully devote two hours to decking themselves for the fray.

* * *

This, note well if you please, is a woman's idea of pleasure—of ecstatic bliss—and the more the salad and the busier the curling iron the merrier. And there is still another end to the game. Heretofore we have considered only the eater of the embalmed bird and the mental and physical impressions of the recipient of this gruesome pickled diet.

But reflect also on the emotions of the artificer of the chicken salad—of her who acts as hostess of the occasion. In the course of the day when

she is preparing for that state socially known as being "at home," she undergoes changes far more wondrous than those of an insect alternating from the pupal, larval, or chrysalid condition to the final butterfly status.

Early in the morning some one fetches her the fowl in the feathers—the live bird "on the hoof" that is to be slaughtered for the fray. After the victim goes to glory by the French Revolution route and the prospective hostess has incarcerated her capillary substance in curl papers, the chicken is hurled into a cauldron, there to boil itself into a condition of refined tenderness and *recherché* whiteness.

This process completed, the culinary autopsy begins, and the fowl is reduced to that shape which precludes all hope of his ever participating in a joyous resurrection. Only the carcass remains, and the bird's own mother would not recognize that, but it must not be inferred that this ghastly souvenir is thrown recklessly into the garbage barrel.

Quite the contrary, if the hostess be a good and trusty housewife.

It is transformed into a stew or hash, and served up that day at dinner to the brute who,

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though paying the freight, is distinctly not "at home" on the evening of the frilled and furbellowed orgy,—to wit, the husband.

Yes, he is allowed to gnaw the carcass, for all such things are tried on the dog,—on Fido, the faithful meal-ticket.

Along about the time that the sun (being a male thing) gets too skittish to show his face, the fair at-homeist begins to plant her batteries in the butler's pantry. Her heaviest ordnance is the chicken salad of course, for with this she must keep up a steady, enfilading fire on the assembled gibble-gabblers, but she also has other weapons of defense and offense.

For instance, several battalions of pink and green cakes and two regiments of sandwiches are arranged to charge *en echelon*, while at the psychological moment immense damage must be done by the mortars which constantly drop burnt almonds and stuffed olives into the camp of the enemy.

From a dense growth of woods, alias trailing cedar and holly, the light infantry, in the form of spiked lemonade, makes repeated attacks on the invaders, who march up to it again and again, undaunted by the terrible slaughter on both sides.

Through all the dark and fearful fray, which results in such frightful destruction and leaves so many maimed for life, the participants are buoyed up by one sweetly solemn and inspiring thought—the possibility of their capturing the greatest of all banners,—the superb red, green, and white tricolor of the pistachial icecream.

Not until the day is nearly o'er do they know whether or not this prize will be within reach, for some hostesses who get widely separated from their base of supplies are not able to furnish this desideratum.

Although a constant rain of grapeshot falls in the form of bonbons, there are times when it is absolutely necessary for the Red Cross Society—all society gets more or less red and cross in these affairs—to cool the parched throats of the wounded and the dying with cream peppermints and *café noir*. After the curtain falls on the bloody arena, beaten biscuit may be seen on every side, while many of the fair amazons carry the marks of the chicken salad all the rest of their lives.

But as Somebody said Somewhere after a most successful killing, there is glory enough for all. Even the beaten biscuit, the dismantled crockery,

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and the torn and frazzled napery are proud in defeat, while the deceased fowl, if he could pull himself together and reconvene his feathers, would flap his wings with delight.

True it is that the hostess falls swooning on a borrowed candelabrum after her last sweet guest has melted into the dusk with the cheering words, "Perfectly lovely time," but all the same she is ready to rally at the next trump and to make another plunge when somebody else is running the heavy ordnance in the pantry.

A seasoned veteran who does not wince under the fire has been known to participate in as many as three of these frays in one evening, and then get home at half-past seven, in time to soothe her irate spouse by sitting down to the table with him and pretending to join him in his supper.

Having been one of such husbands myself, and having time and again seen all the preparations for warfare of this sort, I have learned to appreciate the profundity of the mystery. Nay, more. I have longed to solve it even if the investigation involved participation in the combat and a Herculean struggle under the banner of the red, white, and green.

Reduced to a nutshell, however, the real ques-

tion is, which gets the worst of it all, the hostess, the chicken, or the husband?

We hear ten thousand men replying, "We do, we do, we do," but are they right or do they merely show their masculine irritability?

HOW SHE ROASTED THE QUEEN OF THE ADRIATIC

OF the ten million things which a discreet married man should not do, the most dangerous of all is to attempt to surprise his wife.

The female temperament, whatever virtues it may have, is not built for surprises. It can't stand 'em and it won't stand 'em.

In the first place, woman's curiosity is her predominant trait, and what is more, wifely curiosity anent the tricks of husbands is the strongest of all human emotions.

To surprise a woman into a knowledge of the fact that her consort has gotten the better of her prying and nosings, is to arouse feminine ire to the highest pitch of indignation.

No matter if the surprise be designed to please the wife—that makes no difference; leastwise mighty little, though it may, in some outward degree, abate the wrath which otherwise would follow.

If you must amuse yourself and court danger at the same time, enjoy a quiet hour or so in

throwing dynamite pellets at a granite quarry, or take a peaceful smoke of your pipe while seated on a keg of gunpowder.

* * *

This article comes not from the pen of a celebrated theorist: it is the heart's outpouring of one who has a wife and once sought to surprise her. The recital of the incident to be related is not thrilling, or rather it isn't to anybody but the man who figured in it.

Yet it is full of nature, human nature, or rather female nature, which, let us assume, is the same thing.

For some months past the Commander-in-Chief and myself have been of one mind on a certain subject. It isn't often that we are of one mind, for unanimity, unlike twins, is not born of matrimony.

But in this instance we are of one mind. We both, being of what is called the artistic temperament, have fully agreed that our house looks skimpy. By skimpy we mean obviously suggestive of pecuniary stringency and a desire to treat dollars as if they were india-rubber.

Especially in our mural ornamentation have we found this to be the case. Somehow the dinkey

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little pictures on the walls suggest a solitary pea floundering around in a bowl of shadow soup or a lonely mollusk in a church oyster stew.

"Everybody can see that we've got good taste," said the Queen Bee last Saturday night as she juggled a darning egg in the heel of a badly perforated juvenile sock, "but that doesn't cut any figure. People can also see when a man's hungry, though their perception doesn't feed him. Now a blind man could come in this house and observe by the feel of things that we've got nothing but a lot of measly tea store chromos and calendars, whereas if we had one or two big pictures—fine ones, I mean—it would add tone to the whole place."

And at this she heaved a sigh—one of that peculiar kind of sighs which are estimated by expert financiers to cost husbands something like ten or fifteen dollars a heave.

It was then that I resolved—yes, blindly and madly resolved—to surprise the gentle repairer of hosiery with a present that would remove from the premises every suggestion of skimpyness, dinkyness, or measlyness.

In short, I determined to go down town "unknownst" to the Commander-in-Chief, buy a

fine large picture, have it carted home, and thrown into my astonished house before the good woman could say Jack Robinson.

Now, if I had been young and totally unsophisticated, I might have expected, after such a performance, to have the Queen Bee gratefully meet me when I got off the trolley-car, bundle me in her arms, and peck me on my alabaster brow.

But not being young, and assuredly not unsophisticated, I ought to have known better. Only I didn't.

* * *

In other words, I secretly bought the picture. It was a large and gritty oil painting which reposed in a stupendously heavy gilt frame, and represented Venice, or rather, that part of "the Queen of the Adriatic" which contains the Doges' Palace, the Lion of St. Mark, and so on. The painting, like Venice itself, was not new; indeed, to confess the truth, it was at an auction-house, and there was so much dust on it that one longed to see the gondolas equipped with street sprinklers as they moved, or were supposed to move, down the arid canals.

"They need rain badly in that town," I musingly said to myself when I gazed on the can-

vas, "but the Queen Bee will be lubricated with the oil of joy when it comes rumbling in on her. And she'll be that pleased with me that I wouldn't be surprised if she didn't call this trick cute."

And so, when the bidding commenced, I plunged into the fray. Several old ladies, whose desire for the painting showed that they had no fear of nasal catarrh, were hot after the picture themselves, and scowled ferociously at me when I bid ten dollars. One, speaking in a purposely audible whisper, designated me as "an ungentelemanly, coarse thing," and another said that no true Southern man would bid against a lady.

But inasmuch as there was a woman in the case with me, I remained undaunted, and, much to my horror, the picture was knocked down to me for thirteen dollars and fifty cents.

But no thrill of victory went through me on hearing the glad news. On the contrary, a vague terror seized me, and my palsied knee caps cracked together like castanets. At an auction it all happens so quick that the whole business is over before you have time to experience any sensation save that of remorse.

When I fully realized the elephant that was on my hands horror clutched me in its benumbing

grasp. I knew that I would have the Commander-in-Chief surprised all right—in fact, ferociously astonished, but the hour of my repentance came too late.

Feeling like a man who had murdered his grandmother and knew that the gibbet surely awaited him, I negotiated for the hire of a dray. The picture, by the way, was one of those ample canvases that can only be quartered in a structure especially built to contain them. On the contrary, our house has about the same dimensions as a good ninety-cent Noah's ark.

A distinct feeling of relief came over me when I finally saw the dray disappear with the canvas, and still greater was my sense of complacency at the thought that I would not be at home to share the Queen Bee's surprise with her.

But neither complacency nor relief was destined long to hold sway, for three-quarters of an hour later the dray drove up to my office and in it reappeared the giant picture.

With a heart as heavy as a chunk of quicksilver I heard the jehu's apologies. "Cap'n," said he, with a grin, as he mopped from his bronze brow great beads of perspiration which betokened a mighty struggle but recently over, "de lady say

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dis yah thing doan 'long on her place, and dat no sich whitewashing is a-gwine cum on her premises. When I 'spostulate wif her and tole her you bought it on account of de packet boats, she say if you flung 'way yo' money on sich lumber, den you better jump in de painted canal and git your-self drowned."

After gazing sadly on the dust-begrimed Bridge of Sighs and the arid waterways, and after holding a brief council of war with myself—I knew now that there was to be war—I commanded the jehu to go back home and get that picture into the house if he had to batter down one side of the walls. Realizing that I was ordering him to accomplish a feat beyond the power of one man, I explained that I would precede him on the car.

Oh, the bitter irony of that title Cap'n, the darky had conferred on me! What is a Captain when he stacks up against the Commander-in-Chief? But I knew that sooner or later the surprise specialist had to fricassee in the fiery furnace, so bravely I started homeward.

On arriving, the first sight that met my gaze was the Queen Bee, and she was buzzing like a sawmill.

"Was it you that sent that fool nigger up here

with that cartload of dirt distributed over that circus tent of canvas?" she queried.

"The same," quoth I most humbly. "You know, chickey, you said that what we needed was something large in the way of a painting, and I just thought I would surprise you."

"Thought you would surprise me! did you?" she snorted. "Well, you have succeeded to the queen's taste. You have taken my breath away. I am speechless."

"No, dear, not speechless," I meekly protested.

"Yes, speechless!" she cried out in anguish. "Do you take this house for the Tower of Babel? And if you were looking for something huge, why didn't you send the City of Venice itself? We could have used the town as a swimming pool for the children."

"The thing is a bit large," I answered, apologetically; "but you at least will concede that I got a heap for my money."

"Heap for your money!" she ejaculated. "A heap for your money! You don't mean to say you paid money for that thing, do you? Not real money—you don't mean that. Confederate money, perhaps?"

"Yes, chickey, real money," I softly said; "but

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not much; only thirteen dollars and fifty cents."

At this she made as if to swoon; but I knew her trick,—that instead of swooning she was only getting her monkey up.

And then, wonderful to relate, she said nothing at all for a whole minute; but during this time her thinking apparatus was going like a sledgehammer, and the bellows of her resentment was fanning the forge of her wrath into a furious flame.

Strange to say, when she's maddest her utterances are in the diminuendo. Therefore I was not surprised when she added in cooing tones, "Well, I suppose it might be worse. Looking at it from a cheerful viewpoint, I believe that if you are put in a strait-jacket and kept under the supervision of expert alienists for a month, your reason will return. Yes, truly, it might be worse. You might be a raving maniac, whereas you really do not appear to have reached the homicidal state as yet."

"But I'm darned near it," I thundered. "The next time I spend my money to give you a little surprise—merely to afford you pleasure—I hope I may be drawn and quartered, and then run through a Hamburg steak machine."

This seemed to soften her. You can reach the most adamant of them through cajolery. Remembering that after all I am but a mere man, and that my motives were good, she melted considerably, and, with an eight by ten twinkle in her eye, she said, "Well, old looney, you assuredly have flooded the place; but, as I have said, you might have done worse. I'm glad you held on to that other dollar and a half of the fifteen. Give it to me." (This most peremptorily.) "And, after all," she continued, "your only mistake lies in the fact that you planned to give me a little surprise, whereas you succeeded in giving me a great one. I'll get my gum boots and have Venice put down in the cellar, where we can raise muskrats. And the next time you want to surprise me, send up a dozen pairs of No. 3 shoes for our centipedes. The poor can't afford to be astonished though a man, be he prince or pauper, is mighty apt to do something amazing when he drifts into an auction-house."

Now what she said about the poor is true, though never yet has this surprise specialist been able to reconcile her position with the fact that the next day, on the strength of my extravagance, she went down town and bought a twenty-dollar hat for herself.

“DENIGGERIZATION” AND WHAT IT MEANS TO HUSBANDS

“How blessings brighten as they take their flight.” Now there’s that adorable colored cook we used to have and that spiteful white cook we have at present. The angelic colored cook,—an ever brightening blessing,—has flown; the spiteful white cook is still with us. She is the Commander-in-Chief.

Yes, it’s our time now; we have been denigerized, if such a word may be regarded as permissible. And if it isn’t, it ought to, for love and deniggerization some day must come to all.

We thought we were the one family in the universe who would never be without a cook. Others in the same fix used to call forth our scorn and contempt. I have even written—and sold—satires vilifying people who “talked servant” and harped on the shortcomings of our swart Congo and Senegambian exotics.

Now I wear sackcloth and ashes, and there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in our household. Nor am I doing it all; indeed, the

bulk of the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, to say nothing of the wearing of the ashes, is being done by the Commander-in-Chief.

For once that woman has met a situation to which she cannot rise superior. More properly speaking, she doesn't rise at all, for not since last Tuesday has she ever got a chance to sit down.

Although not an uxorious man, it has always been my boast that the paleface now manipulating our gas stove and filling me three times a day with chipped beef, was the queen of the world when it came to understanding niggers and knowing how to unkink their idiosyncrasies.

Over and over again, the world has heard me proudly say that there wasn't that darkey born that wouldn't submit to being bossed by the Commander-in-Chief—that wouldn't do just as she listed, if she so much as crooked her little finger.

I have even insisted that niggers loved and revered her as they do watermelon and 'possum. But pride goeth before destruction. Our happy home has been deniggerized. We are without a "cullud pusson" on the premises. "God's image cut in ebony" is not to be seen on our place. Truly, the melancholy days have come

and we are hopelessly bemired in the domestic slough.

* * *

Of course we have had deaths in the families of our darkeys and funerals innumerable, to say nothing of the annual two-weeks frenzy due to rural camp meetings, but all these were regularly accepted incidents of the mighty game known as Caucasian versus Ethiopian. To tell the truth, we wouldn't have been quite comfortable if some good old brother in Goosland or Loo-esa or Car'-line hadn't turned up his toes every month or so. And then, too, we cheerfully resigned ourselves to having him kept out of ground until the whole county cried for carbolic acid and disinfectants. Nay more, we were always blithe and cheery if the black-burying parties didn't last over twenty-four hours, for once they were ended, the *status quo ante* of the kitchen was restored and bliss reigned supreme.

But to be completely, hopelessly, and apparently irremediably deniggerized, is more than human nature can stand.

Yet such is the fate that lowers darkly before us now. Our Blessing—alas, we didn't always take her to be the pure gold we now

recognize her to be—has spread out her sable pinions and flown.

Little boots it with her that she came a ham-hoofed fledgeling from the Hanover slashes into our home, and step by step climbed from bucolic stupidity to cityfied wisdom. Climbed did we say?—well, hardly; for it was the Commander-in-Chief who, by dint of unrelaxing vigilance, shoved the vixen upward and taught her all she knows. If there's any one thing on earth that is greener than any other green thing, it is a black, blue-gum darkey from Hanover.

Our Lost One, the day she first arrived, didn't know a visiting card from a slice of tripe, and it took the persuasions of the whole household to keep her from answering the doorbell barefooted. As for the telephone, it was more marvelous to her than all the manifestations of nature, while the mystery of the gas-jets almost made her pop eyes jump out of her anthropoid skull.

But she learned so fast with the Queen Bee at her heels that in two weeks she had beaux calling her up by telephone and then, when they came, she would entertain them in the kitchen under the rich glow of our once dangerous gas-jets.

Furthermore, she not only learned to differentiate between tripe and visiting cards, but became so averse to barefootedness that she consistently wore my shoes when I myself did not have them on. Before long, indeed, she grew so thoroughly saturated with urban influences that she scorned the mere suggestion of the country—leastwise, at all times save the camp meeting season, when she heard the call of the wild and sniffed from afar the redolence of fried chicken and shoat.

There were occasions, be it confessed, when our Lost One irritated us, and when the Commander-in-Chief, taking her as the criterion of her whole slatternly race, hurled anathemas at her kinky head and wished her in Ballyhack.

But forgive her; the Queen Bee had not then cut her wisdom teeth or learned the bitter lesson that the fraction of a darkey is immeasurably better than no darkey at all. Little did she then realize the absolute horrors of complete denig-gerization—the deadly, sickening sensation that overcomes a housekeeper when she enters a darkeyless kitchen, which lacks even the suggestion of a pickaninny.

“If a woolly head so much as comes within a

hundred feet of our back yard now," says she, "I'll lasso it, if it costs me my life, for what I've done this week ain't fit for publication. Oh! I just wish you had it to go through." (This last with peculiar ferocity to me just as if I am the scapegoat of the whole negro race.)

* * *

Now, as a matter of fact, the motif of this entire article is a plea for mercy in behalf of the wifeless man of a deniggerized home. I say wifeless because the husband, immediately upon losing his cook, is forthwith grass-widowed by the descent of his spouse into the kitchen.

Most able-bodied men—we say it with respectfully bated breath—could stand losing their wives for a few days, were it not for the atrocious features attending the loss. To begin with, the departure of the she-Afro-American instantly brings into execution that dear old maxim. "Try it on the dog." And it needs hardly be said that the dog in this case is the husband.

He, the Dog, at once becomes the un murmuring receptacle for baker's bread, chipped beef, scrambled eggs, and such other edibles as come from the grocer's in an embalmed state, which necessitates little or no cooking.

The unhappy consort of a niggerless helpmeet at the end of the first twenty-four hours is so cowed into a state of yellow-dog meekness that when he reaches the threshold of his home he “daresn’t” march in like a gentleman, but merely whines at the door for admission. And when ingress is ultimately allowed him, he forthwith darts behind the piano or makes a panic-stricken break for the cellar. The sight of a broom at such a time would make him faint.

From a safe distance he yelps back in response to questions that he has inserted “want ads” in all the papers, and likewise flagged down every colored citizen visible, in a frenzied quest for cooks. Bidden to come gulp down his “vittels,” he slinks into the kitchen—dining-rooms are abandoned during the reign of terror—and bal-lasts himself with his quantum of baker’s bread, chipped beef, and eggs scrambled on the gas-stove.

After this he braces himself for the awfulest of all the awful ordeals that are to come,—the fearful raking over he gets for having been down town for twelve hours enjoying himself working, while his poor, dutiful, persecuted spouse was wasting away her life on a scullion’s duties.

It's no use for him to say anything, for pleas by way of confession and avoidance only serve to convict him. True, the poor yellow dog, whose slats begin to protude in a few days from very hunger, never does quite understand how he's to blame, but all the same an overwhelming sense of guilt paralyzes him. He knows but one thing,—that deniggerization, like war, is—well, don't let's mention the word while the Episcopal Convention is here. But everybody who's been without a cook knows what's intended.

Now far be it from this unlicensed, self-effacing, razor-back, tremulous yellow dog to utter a single growl of protest or to lick his chops in fond remembrance of the food he used to eat. All he knows is that he'll pay any price suggested for a live, able-bodied cook—the blacker the better.

And he would prefer for the Commander-in-Chief not to have her picture taken this week, as she isn't at her sweetest just now.

JUVENILE THIRST AT THE EXPOSITION

GROANING under thirty pounds of chicken and ham sandwiches, and bristling with five corset boxes full of seafoam crackers, home-made ginger cakes and gherkin pickles, me and mine—or rather the Commander-in-Chief and hers—entered the Jamestown Exposition grounds one sunny day last week to see the sights and stretch our necks in beautiful domestic harmony.

At the very start we had a disagreeable incident, for the domineering woman who bossed the party got hung up in a turnstile gate, and for some little while she furiously revolved like a captive squirrel in a cage.

Then the dense throng just behind us charged our party with their sandwich boxes—everybody appears loaded with provender at the “Expo”—and for a few minutes our ribs were poked and jabbed unmercifully by half the food supply of the United States. In this contest many of the biscuits were beaten.

* * *

It may be well to say at this juncture that

while the Tercentenary is primarily an educational institution, its visitors never overlook the fact that wisdom cannot be attained unless the seeker after knowledge is well ballasted with food.

Although our little party carried more grub than "Jeb" Stuart's cavalry, the "stepping stones" in my covey had hardly got inside the gates before they began screaming for the pop-corn which everywhere met their gaze. And so they were duly pop-corned, after which they were successively peanut-ed and lemonaded and ginger-caked.

Then little William Jennings Bryan bawled for water and the other twelve took up the aquatic anthem and chorused for liquid refreshments until life became unendurable.

Pretty soon we discovered a small booth which apparently was doing business without any proprietor. It was a simple apparatus, containing many inverted bottles of clear, crystal-like water, with cup attachments. Here we purposed laving the throttles of the thirteen, but lo and behold! when we approached nearer we saw a courteous sign stating that one had to drop a penny in the slot in order to get a drink. The cold inhospitality of this scheme smote the Com-

mander-in-Chief to the soul, and, figuratively speaking, the expert piemaker foamed at the mouth. She abused the president, the board of governors, and everybody connected with the exposition, and insisted that a man who would sell water would graze a goat on his mother's grave.

"We've got a whole riverful of it that we would give 'way in our town," she snorted, "and yet these folks would charge us more for the stuff than it would cost me to make a Brunswick stew in Richmond."

In vain did I endeavor to soothe the irate mass of petticoated indignation. "The cat's foot," she snapped out, "why! the people who run this thing ought to be ashamed to look themselves in the face in a mirror."

True, we found free water a plenty a little later on, but this didn't appease her, and she grumbled from 9 A. M. until 10:30 P. M. To make things worse, the thirteen juveniles insisted on getting thirsty at the very places where water was not to be found without cost, so the tanking-up process was a continuous performance of expense and vituperation.

* * *

Really I believe the Queen Bee derived the

keenest delight from having found, at the very jump, something which gave her a substantial grievance. You know she always did delight in making her conversations bristle like a paper of pins, and thrice thirty times that memorable day I heard her sarcastically tell the children not to perspire, as water at the exposition was too expensive for such a luxury.

But the good woman with the microscopic eye for defects did not really appear sublime in her wrath until she asked for a glass of water in a certain restaurant, and was told that it would cost her five cents. If the waitress who ventured this information still survives after the withering glances cast upon her, she must previously have cut her teeth on dynamite cartridges, drunk carbolic acid instead of milk in infancy, and used a red-hot oven for a cradle.

But let us not dwell on these painful details, for they might lead one to think the exposition is being depreciated, whereas we had more fun that day than a box of monkeys, and still talk about the sights in our sleep.

And right here let it be understood that the Queen Bee herself was delighted with the outlay. This I know, because I have made a study of that

woman, and can read her like a book, although there are times when the reading involves as much labor as the literature comprised within the fascinating pages of a Latin grammar.

Here's the way I tell beyond the peradventure of a doubt that she was interested. In the course of the day she met several housewives from our town, and not once did they discuss the virtues and defects of their respective cooks. Nowadays, when women meet and don't discuss their negro help, one may instantly infer that they have been completely transported. I sincerely believe that if the Commander-in-Chief had been present at the burning of Troy, she would have flagged Mrs. Aeneas down, despite the general stampede, and asked that unfortunate woman whether her new laundress was a good washer and ironer. Therefore, when it is said that she never once "talked nigger" that day, it may be safely assumed that she was completely taken out of herself.

* * *

But to return to the boardwalk, otherwise the Warpath of the Exposition: Thither we led the squirming, excited baker's dozen, who were wriggling, writhing, serpentineing, and fidgeting like a school of minnows. Every time they saw some-

thing that attracted their attention,—that is, about twice every second,—one of them would give a yank at my Prince Albert coat-tails and shrilly scream out, “O Pa, look there!” or “O Pa! ain’t it bully?” or “Let’s see that.”

The Queen Bee, stern as a statue in adamant, rebuked these demonstrations, but all the same her head spun ’round as if it were working on a pivot.

When we got to the Streets of Cairo, where that exquisite musical creation, known as the accompaniment to the Huche-Kuche, was being blasted out, we paused in front of the gate to get what was coming to us in the way of a free show. On a gayly decked platform sat a lovely bunch of black-eyed houris with abundantly filled red stockings and hands which showed an utter repudiation of soap. Hard by a spongy-looking camel with a very moth-eaten complexion licked his ear with a remarkably prehensile upper lip, while a donkey stood sedately to the left and eyed the throng in a supercilious way, which plainly showed that he thought all people were asses.

Pretty soon a short female person, brunette in coloring, bespangled in crimson attire and thrillingly plump in the matter of motive power, be-

gan to dance, or rather to spin around, in a manner which would have given me the vertigo had I not been so deeply interested in her fascinating architectural lines. This gal caught me. She was a pipperrino—only I didn't say so before the Queen Bee.

Forthwith I resolved to mortgage the family plate in order to see this show.

"It will be like a college education to the children," quoth I.

"Yes, like a college education they won't get," sagely retorted the generalissimo. "Do you think that I am going to let my children go in there to see those horrid pieces. They don't want to go anyhow, do you, children?"

"Yaas'm, we do," came the chorus, whereat the gunpowder exploded. "That's just like you," she snorted; "you let your Pa twist you round his fingers, you little imps. But none of you shall go—no, not even your Pa. Horses couldn't drag us into such a place while I have breath in my body. Instead we will go to the W. C. T. U. restaurant and get some lunch."

Now this was a master stroke. The question of food—or rather of more food—is always the dominant thought in the minds of the thirteen.

Every quarter of an hour they eat as if they had just ended a lifetime fast. So it was all up with the Streets of Cairo. We were dragged off, and the short girl, with the attractive architectural lines, is now but a hazy, whirling memory, who twinkles occasionally in my mind when the Queen Bee is otherwise engaged and not running the police department of my conscience. But just between us, let me whisper that posterity will never know how I lament my failure to give that girl the encouragement of my presence inside the Streets of Cairo.

* * *

Nothing on the outside of the Filipino Village indicated that this interesting resort would subvert my sensitive morals, so the Queen Bee emptied the yarn sock she bore in her reticule, took out about a soup-plate full of quarters and paid our way inside. A dapper little midget of an Oriental, who looked like a mulatto trying to be a miniature Chinnee, greeted us in an immaculate white suit, and proceeded to expound the wonders of the place.

The Queen Bee, thinking him suspiciously like our own "cullud folks," was decidedly offish at first and pretended not to be listening to what

he was saying. The dear little mannikin spoke so pleasantly, however, that her curiosity got the better of her frigidity, and finally she loosened up to such an extent that she offered him a chicken sandwich and a gherkin pickle, which looked painfully like a dead mouse.

This indiscretion on her part well-nigh ruined the whole visit, for the mere suggestion of food threw the whole chorus into their seventeenth spasm of hunger, and each of the thirteen again had to be fed, after which it once more became necessary to tank them up.

All would have been peaceful, despite this interruption, had we not drifted toward the quarters occupied by some of the more savage tribes. Now these natives have a charmingly unconventional way of wearing astonishingly short pants, and of also doing away with other garments deemed superfluous for summer wear, though none but the most fastidious could allege that they are immodestly attired.

Still they didn't please the Commander-in-Chief, and powerful was the sermon she delivered to our guide on the urgent necessity for immediately garbing the Filipinos in the latest style of creased trousers.

Her disgust merged almost into frenzy when she was informed that the savages were allowed to fight roosters, and on seeing a sample of the feathery scrapping she became almost a second Carrie Nation.

Had the children not diverted her attention at this juncture by calling for ginger cakes, there is no telling what would have happened for she was getting rapidly into action for an old Virginia war-dance.

The expedition ended most felicitously, despite the concatenation of incidents related, for a new-mown Filipino baby, just six weeks old, was next exhibited, and this dear little ball of amber fat quite delighted the maternal spirit who piloted us.

Forthwith she pounced on the baby's mother for dressing the brat so thinly, and hurled a burning discourse at the erring parent. As the Filipino Ma spoke a language different from the Hanover patois employed by the mother of our stepping-stones, I fear the lecture did not take root, but it certainly did no harm.

* * *

A good part of the rest of our day—delightful as it was—was set apart for the distribution

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of more sandwiches among the children and for giving ear to further whinings for water, but on the whole I believe that nobody starved or died of thirst.

When we quit late at night the youngsters were still healthily hungry, but full of reminiscences, and nobody can deny that we got our money's worth.

It is well, however, not to be the father of quite so many when one attends the Tercentenary.

TWO AWFUL EVENTS

THE most horrible experiences of my life have been the battle of Gettysburg, in the year 1863, and the five o'clock tea given by my wife on January 13, 1901.

When I compare these two memorable occasions and weigh the various tortures and heart-burnings incident to each, I am inclined to think that Gettysburg was the "least worst."

At Gettysburg the agony was soon over with the dead and wounded, and I at least had a chance to tap the tank of glory and to enshroud myself in a degree of heroism which will live perennially as soon as Southern publishers get a chance to put their histories on the open market.

The five o'clock tea, on the other hand, was the most ignominious experience I ever underwent, and while the Commander-in-Chief and her minions were in its throes, I was but as the scurf of the earth.

Then, too, I was one of the main features of the battle of Gettysburg, and contributed largely to the awful splendor of that occasion, whereas

I was kicked out of the house, bag and baggage, on the day of the five o'clock tea, and can only prove an alibi when that splendid social entertainment is mentioned.

'Most every man who holds public office in the South can tell you about the battle of Gettysburg, but I and the small colored boy, who ran errands during a certain memorable week, are the only male creatures who can speak authoritatively about the five o'clock tea. What I relate is based partly upon hearsay evidence and partly upon what I saw and heard before and afterward. The details are not particularly interesting, save that they serve as a warning to the bipeds who wear trousers, and if carefully read and studied, may save other bearded animals from indescribable tortures.

* * *

For some eighteen months past the Commander-in-Chief has been reading about "bonton functions" and social affairs, and from the way she absorbed the society notes in the newspapers I knew that trouble was brewing. At times she would turn from the papers and begin counting the spoons and chairs in the house; then she would

lapse into calculations about the size of our rooms and the number of people they would seat.

For the life of me, I couldn't interpret these mental aberrations, but in the light of recent events, the explanation looms up with heartrending distinctness. It is plain now, and though bruised and sore I see it all. The mote has been removed from my eyes and things that once puzzled me are no longer mysteries.

The crisis came at breakfast one morning when the good woman, with a codfish ball carefully balanced on her triple-plated silver fork, remarked to me: "Dear, we've decided to give a little entertainment in honor of Mrs. T. Hopkinson Tutwiler, who is staying with Cousin Mandy. Of course, we aren't going to try to do much—just a few friends, you know, with a little tea and pleasant gossip. I guess there'll be about eight in the party, which will be purely informal. No menfolks, of course, but simply a petticoat affair, to show a delicate little attention to a nice woman, who might invite us to visit her in the summer."

Now it came to pass that when the eight beneficiaries of the magnificent affair were counted and their names were written down on paper,

it became manifest that certain other dames omitted from the list would get hopping mad if they weren't invited. So their names were added, too. Then it further developed that the sisters, cousins, and aunts of the extra beneficiaries would make life unbearable if they were lopped off from the list, so they also were put down, with many protests.

Further cogitation, reflection, investigation, consideration, and explanation demonstrated the fact that it would be March madness to invite people living six blocks away and omit the nearby neighbors who send in waiters of jelly and tapioca pudding whenever they have an extra good dessert.

And so, the first thing we knew, there were forty-nine ladies on the list, not to mention the very definite prospect of making seventy-three very angry because they had been left off.

This state of affairs made the good woman squirmy and bitter against social conditions. She said she was tired of "the whole plague-take-it-business" and wished she'd never thought of it.

I suggested—in my humble, apologetic way—that the wise thing to do was to call the whole business off, whereat she crushed me in the earth

with a withering look and turned up her nose so scornfully that it scraped her forehead.

"All right," said I, "consider me dead to the world and shoulder your own troubles. I was in a railroad smash-up once, and I guess I can stand this business if I stood that."

And so the poor ostrich, instead of taking good advice upon the approach of danger, deliberately buried her befuddled head still deeper in the sand.

* * *

For the next three days I was without a home—or rather I had a home and didn't want to go to it. The old house was the scene of changes and disturbances which suggested geological chaos. My superannuated shoes, which had peacefully reposed beneath the bookcase in the sitting-room, were removed to parts unknown; my pipes and tobacco vanished never to be found again; the piles of newspapers which had been my comfort in life were hurried into the cooking-range: the table containing the students' lamp, dictionary, city directory, ash-receiver, inkstand, and reports of the Commissioner of Agriculture, was hustled to the loft. Downstairs the hurricane of cleanliness, borne on the wings of brooms, swept aside every broken chair, settee,

hat-rack, umbrella-stand, and three-legged table within sight, and in their place were substituted various articles of furniture borrowed from she-cousins, sisters, and aunts, who were eagerly discussing the coming event.

Next followed a deluge of other people's piano and parlor lamps, which poured in from interested relatives, who hourly and momentarily discussed the prospective "function."

Last of all came bushels of borrowed knives and forks and silver spoons, and brigades of chocolate cups and platoons of foreign napkins, to say nothing of cut-glass contributions and carloads of feminine advice.

The crisis was near at hand and excitement was at a fever heat. Twenty-four hours in advance two monster turkeys arrived, and ere long they were put in soak with the ultimate purpose of reducing them to salad. Then she-cousins, whom I had not seen for years, bobbed up to assist in the cakemaking and to offer suggestions, as to how the ham sandwiches should be tied up with string ribbons.

Mathematical calculations were made as to the expense accompanying the whole outlay, and experts were put to figuring how long the stuff

left by the guests would last to feed my family.

Colored people came from far and near to help and to pick up such scraps of food as the petticoated captains would give them for the services they rendered.

The total expense of the entertainment was figured out long beforehand, and there were the minutest calculations as to how much each mouth would eat, and how far the salad left on the plates would go toward satisfying the darkies who figured in the affair. Never has there been a more superb display of mathematical talent or economic acumen.

Mind you, I get all this from eye-witnesses. Of course, I was not there myself. Home had long since ceased to be a place of rest for me, and I never dropped in until after midnight. Then I slept on the camphor-chest in the bath-room and washed with turpentine soap in the kitchen.

* * *

At the appointed hour the thing came off with a buzz and a cackling and a chattering and a gibble-gibble-gabbling which cracked the glass in the skylight and scared all the rats and mice off the premises. Piano lamps flickered in the hallways; piano lamps twinkled in the parlors; piano

lamps flamed and spluttered in the dining-room; piano lamps smoked and threatened in the sitting-room; piano lamps illumined dark corners hitherto used for old overshoes and soiled laundry; candelabra blinked on the tables and shot up flames on the mantels; candelabra peeped out from banks of cedar bought at ten cents a bunch; candelabra disseminated the odor of burning tallow and threatened a call for the entire fire department.

It was grand, weird, lurid, uncanny, and heart-rending—at least, it would have been to a man, had any man dared intrude, which none did or cared to do.

The Commander-in-Chief, with her face lubricated by Talcum powders, her hands softened by glycerine, camphor-ice, and rag-poultices, and her corduroy throat enmeshed in a gauzy waist of last summer's cut, did the honors with grace. Sublime was her anxiety about how much each guest was going to eat, and whether she had counted the expenses accurately.

Tea weak enough to nauseate was served in borrowed cups with bouquets painted on them, and sandwiches bound together by pink ribbons were served with the understanding that it was

bad form to eat the ribbons. Cake kalsomined with pink icing was distributed, and turkey-salad with ninety-nine per cent. celery was brought forth for destruction.

Then came the burnt almonds, which everybody wanted to eat by the quart (but which cost too much to justify such greediness), and the ice-cream merging from rose color to a green tint which suggests the chemical used for the destruction of potato-bugs.

Nobody but Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, or some of those heavy-weight literary boys could begin to describe the details of the "function," or give a lucid idea of all that happened on that memorable evening. For my part, I wouldn't attempt it with a car-load of dictionaries at my side. Suffice it to say that when I crept in at midnight of that day I found the Commander-in-Chief puffing and blowing like a stranded whale. All she could do when I approached her was to groan and roll her eyeballs about.

Let us not pause to dwell upon these painful scenes. The sequel of the entertainment was something like this: Two hundred and sixty people (women) fighting mad because they hadn't been invited; the Commander-in-Chief

snubbed eighteen times by persons of this class; three piano-shades broken, two tablecloths hopelessly soiled; thirteen borrowed spoons, six forks, and two silver-plated knives lost; my best pipe and tobacco-box gone forever; the cook pessimistic, and the Commander-in-Chief resolved to lead a better life.

But we got our names in the society column, and the good woman was alluded to as "charming." If the other people are satisfied, we are.

* * *

A gentleman, from Rocky Mount, N. C., offers me an idea which tickles him, but mystifies me; or rather I am utterly unable to explain the phenomenon which he describes. He says: "I am a married man, a countryman, and have no 'axe to grind.' I send you this idea,—to wit: Any married man, at any time, may come into his wife's presence when she is alone and say, 'You are looking remarkably well and pretty to-day,' and she will within two minutes, or less, go to the mirror and see if it is so.

"It matters not how many times you say it—even if you have laughed at her about it before and said you didn't mean it and only said it to see if she would survey herself—she will still

try the mirror, even if she has to wait for you to get out of the room. I have tried it and watched through the door crack."

I haven't the slightest doubt that my friend speaks truly, but have no means of verifying his assertion, as my Queen Bee looks at herself in the mirror every two minutes, whether I tell her she is pretty or not. And, besides, I never tell her she is comely. For me to do so would cost me money. She would seize upon the compliment and draw dividends from it. Between "us girls," I think she is pretty, but the day I tell her so will be the day I'm drunk or cranky.

THE AMPHIBIOUS QUEEN BEE AND HER "RAINY DAYS"

SOME charitable institution with a sincere desire to do good could accomplish a noble work by sending two pairs of eight-ounce boxing-gloves up to our house for use when the Queen Bee and myself discuss that most interesting subject,—the necessity for saving money and providing for a rainy day.

Or, if no boxing-gloves are obtainable, two good baseball bats or even two strong, hickory ax-helves might do. The truth is that on such occasions as those mentioned both the worthy woman and myself stand in crying need of offensive weapons of the most durable sort.

In a word, there is nothing that makes us scrappier than a little heart-to-heart talk about economy. Theoretically we both believe in it, but as a practical proposition each of us thinks the other ought to make all the sacrifices.

Then, too, in the barometer of the Commander-in-Chief there is no such thing as a rainy day—or rather none rainier than the present pluvial

spell. When I suggest that she put on the overshoes of economy and duck under the umbrella of thrift, she forthwith begins to paint me as a prodigal son with the fastidious tastes and extravagant ideas of a Sybarite.

Then it is that she advises me to roll up my trousers lest their bottoms become moistened by the slush of my own reckless expenditures, or soiled with the mud of my perpetual self-indulgence.

After all other arguments have proved unavailing this Minerva of women ups and swears that the money I annually smoke up in tobacco alone would give two sons a college education, besides sending three daughters to a female seminary.

In vain have I tried to persuade her that a man actually striving to commit suicide by excessive indulgence in tobacco could not possibly spend as much as twenty-five dollars a year on the weed.

One might as well seek to budge the pyramid of Cheops.

Nothing can move her. She sees the whole house going up in smoke and swears that she believes all mortgages are written on Carolina bright leaves instead of on paper or parchment.

Moreover, she insists that the odor of boiling cabbage is like unto attar of roses when brought into comparison with the aroma of a pipe.

Verily I believe it would break that 'oman's heart if I cut out tobacco.

Such self-abnegation on my part would take from her a luxurious staff on which she has been wont to lean for many a day when she rehearsed her grievances and pictured herself as an un murmuring martyr.

Plague if I don't suspect that every night she prays for the soul of John Rolfe, the man who took Pocahontas off Captain John Smith's hands and further benefited humanity by introducing tobacco culture among the English-speaking people.

Yes, the smoking evil is the sweetest thing in the Queen Bee's life,—the one ever available club with which she can swat her oppressor. Mind you, I'm her oppressor.

* * *

But be it remembered that I also have other faults which cost money and are heralded abroad when economy is the agonizing theme of our debates.

There is the corn whiskey, for instance. Like-

wise the other brands, but particularly the corn.

Now even our preacher admits that I "ought to take a little," especially when I tell him what a nervous wreck I am. Moreover, I have always been most conscientious in saying that I cannot bear the taste of liquor and furthermore I invariably make a wry face after taking a drink.

These evidences of my dislike ought to be enough to satisfy anybody that it comes hard with me to swallow the stuff.

But no, the Commander-in-Chief can't see it that way.

"Even if you do take it for your nerves," says she, "—and the larger the demijohn in the house, the more nervous you become—there is always the expense to be considered. Now the last you got cost four dollars a gallon (unfortunately she saw the bill when it came in). When I think of all that money going down a sink it makes me heartsick. And me and the children scrimping so that we'd skin a flea for his hide and tallow."

I sometimes think myself that it would be a mighty good thing if somebody could invent a process whereby whiskey would stick near the tasting apparatus and not go "down the sink," but that's impossible.

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The best I can do under the circumstances is to remind the good woman that nine-tenths of all the liquor I buy goes into her cooking as seasoning, for when it comes to "spiking" a potato or a mince-meat pie the Queen Bee knows no such thing as cost.

To save my life I can't make that 'oman respect good whiskey, anyhow.

Although for forty cents a quart she can purchase liquor fine enough to make any pie rear up on its hind legs, she invariably hies herself to my floating treasure-house for spirituous seasonings.

Once when all our deacons were at home and were "laying back" on the Queen Bee's plum pudding as if it were a special gift from heaven, I heard that uncertain quantity proudly boast that the whole blessed thing hadn't cost her but thirty cents. Yet to my positive knowledge she had surreptitiously moistened its jet intestines with forty-five cents worth of my eighteen-year-old whiskey.

In matters pertaining to alcoholic fluids, this woman absolutely and resolutely refuses to do homage to old age. If the kids get croupy or wheezy she wouldn't hesitate to discard mutton-

suet and bathe them in imported French brandy, while one of her sweetest traits of character is her tendency to give the cook's admirer a tumblerful of my costliest mountain-dew every time he sweeps five cents worth of snow off the porch.

"Some women who have no thought of 'economy would pay the man ten cents for such a trifling job," proudly declares she, "but not I, the battle-scarred veteran of economy."

No, not she, for instead of doing that the Queen Bee gives him thirty cents in liquor—my liquor, too, which I, of course, get free.

But let me take a drink of it for my poor, shattered, frazzled-out, jump-out-of-my-skin nerves. Then it's worth about the same as molten gold, seasoned with melted pearls, and every gulp means that I'm bringing desolation to my home.

* * *

As my "works" are read extensively by young men and ambitious youths preparing to become president, I am exceedingly loath to acknowledge even the existence of such stuff as whiskey, but it may be that my experiences will serve as an awful example. Certainly if there were none, our pies would not have so much strength of char-

acter, and our cook's admirer would suffer from an aridity of gullet now totally unfamiliar to him.

But the great bacteriologist hunting for fault-microbes in my make-up has also discovered other weaknesses tending to show my extravagance and unwillingness to apply the principles of economy to my own case.

For example, she has never ceased to be resentful because I carry life insurance, and have got her named as beneficiary in the policy. To save my life I can't convince that woman that I pay out one hundred and fifty dollars a year in premiums so that my posthumous magnanimity may put a gilt-edge on her rejuvenating widowhood.

Without exactly being able to figure it out, she suspects, I believe, that by some hook or crook I'll slip out of the ground after the policy is paid and euchre her out of the fruits of her "scrimping."

"No, siree," says she, "it may be a mighty good thing, but I wish you'd pay the premiums to me every year and not stave me off with the prospect of outliving an old lightwood knot like you. Don't talk to me about hiving up for your

rainy days, when I've been paddling around in equinoctial showers ever since I married you. If things get any wetter than they are now, you'd better leave me a Noah's ark."

Now to confess a ghastly truth, the Commander-in-Chief's idea about saving is that one ought religiously to lay aside all the money one doesn't need,—the kind, for instance, that one would throw at birds or have made into watch-charms and cuff-buttons.

Up our way all the birds have migrated, and we don't wear cuffs or watches, so the peculiar exigencies necessitating economy don't exist in her mind—leastwise not so far as things pertain to her. As already indicated, she hasn't got any objections to my practicing self-denial so long as the total-abstinence dividends are paid annually into her coffers, but when it comes to a sock plethoric with unused and unusable currency, she says, "Avaunt."

* * *

Once, when I had a spell of dyspepsia that made me too miserable to need even Confederate money, I saved ninety-eight dollars which, according to my unselfish ideas, would enable my own obsequies to be conducted on a refreshingly pleas-

ing cash basis, but it nearly ruined me for life when the Queen Bee, nosing around in my papers, unearthed the wad.

Within a month after that time she had spent five times the sum mentioned, for she became firmly convinced that I was possessed of so much superfluous wealth that I merely amused myself hiding it about the house. Nothing could make her believe that the rooster who gets a nest-egg accomplishes this end by the severest travail and self-restraint.

It wouldn't have surprised her after that find if she had detected green-backs in the feather mattresses, and shining battalions of golden eagles behind the entire wainscoting of the house. In sooth, she then and there resolved to have everything she wanted and a heap of things she didn't want.

Otherwise, argued this philosopher in whale-bone and face-powder, she would wear herself away economizing, and then "some other woman would come along" and gather in the fruits of her parsimony.

And right here it should be stated in justice to the rest of the whimsical sex that the Queen Bee has long since fixed that "other woman." This

creature, whoever she may be, had better come with a dowry when the proper moment arrives, for otherwise she, too, will strike me during a protracted rainy spell, when nothing short of web-feet will pull her through.

* * *

In view of the facts cited in the foregoing paragraphs, I have found it expedient to promulgate my theories about economy by methods totally unlike those adopted by any other men. Within the last week I have talked about "rainy days" as flippantly as any muscovy duck would do, while I tell the Commander-in-Chief that "money comes easy and ought to go easy," always excusing, of course, such capital as is invested in my mellower grades of whiskey.

"If you really want point lace and diamonds," say I, "why go and get 'em, and if it's bad under foot, why come back home in the automobile."

And I mean it too,—that is, if she can get the credit or find the automobile.

THROUGH OLD LOUISA'S VINE- FRINGED GATEWAYS

FREDERICK'S HALL, LOUISA COUNTY,

August 3.

DEAR EDITOR: This is one of the most prosperous and thrifty communities I have seen in rural Virginia, and one can even spend money here. In other sections business is done with eggs as the circulating medium. The place has at least two stores, three phonographs, an engine tank, and so many summer boarders that the natives, who are always in for anything new, are kept continually rubber-necking.

Then, too, there is a railroad station, and the trains cause never-ending excitement. Grass-widowers come up from the city every Saturday afternoon, and it is always a matter of interest to see whether or not they will kiss their wives at the day-po.

Frederick's Hall had a railroad station before the war and its residents are thoroughly cultured. They know even more about the Richmond baseball team than the people at Lewiston, and many

of them actually looked indifferent the first time they heard a phonograph. This, of course, does not apply to the colored population. As this class scorns to stain its hands with honest toil, it has plenty of leisure, and therefore is willing to listen to music of any sort—even the metallic blatancy of a graphophone.

The day the Queen Bee and I visited the points of interest in and about Frederick's Hall a banjo was working overtime on the porch of the leading store, so that no colored help was obtainable on the neighboring farms.

Those who found time to tear themselves away from the catgut melodies sat for haircuts, which were "rendered" by a tonsorial artist of the neighborhood.

City folks have no idea what a problem the hair-cutting proposition is in the country. Unless local talent is available, the capillary substance of the natives is apt to grow up in pine and oak brush, with sassafras bushes on the edges, so that the entire male population looks like a crop of Samsons, free from the influence of Delilah.

And even after the local talent gets busy with the shears the effect is sometimes startling. I

have seen some of the haircut victims whose heads, after being harvested, reminded me of Bedford county as viewed from the Peaks of Ottor.

It is not wise to see a "cullud bruther" barbered just before you intend going to dinner. The picture is not appetizing. It makes one feel as if he had been taking calomel. The rural rooster when about to be scalped does not seek privacy, like a shy fawn, but stations himself near some of the village landmarks, and there allows the barber to do his worst. This gives great publicity to the performance, and during dull seasons helps to break the monotony.

* * *

The fact that the Frederick-Hallites get their hair cut in public should not, however, be construed as indicative of backwardness or lack of polish on their part. Never did the sun freckle a more amiable, hospitable people, and persons who contemplate unloading a consignment of gold brick on them will find that they are up to snuff.

The stranger who comes within the gates of this community—like all other sections, it has about ten gates to the acre—will enjoy a welcome which ought to make him feel good all over. But he should be careful to make his last will and

testament before he goes to dinner, for Louisa folks live on the fat of the land, and they expect people to devour their weight in grub every time they sit down to table.

And especially strong are the natives on fried apples. These they cook for breakfast, supper, and dinner, and truly the dish is an ambrosial one. For ten years the Commander-in-Chief has been trying to cook city apples like the Louisans, and now she says she is about to give up in despair.

The baffled kitchen artist declares she believes the whole secret lies in the amount of bacon and ham that the country housewives fry with the fruit; in other words, that the dish, though monstrous fine, would bankrupt a city matron. This surmise is based on her well-known theory that everything good comes high.

But whatever are the means employed for frying apples in Louisa, the fact remains that the dish, when it comes on the table, tastes like the cooked music of a brass band, and is so healthful that the eater soon begins to feel that he is the king pippin of the Commonwealth.

Scarcely less delicious is the extract of Louisa cow, which looks so white and creamy and bubbly

that one at first imagines he is about to drink the lather of Yankee shaving soap. Too much cannot be said in praise of the conscientious cows who give such milk. Yet, strange to relate, country folks always regard cows with the evil eye, for it is owing to the presence of these animals in the land that so many gates are necessary. The average rural cow would be willing to crawl through a rabbit hole to get into a cornfield or garden, and once there, she does enough harm to cause a lifetime of remorse.

The worst sin a man can commit in the country is to leave open a pasture gate, so that the stock can get a chance at the crops. Killing a president is by no means so atrocious a felony. Oftentimes at night, when I am in the rural districts, I lie awake and am haunted by the vague fear that mayhap I have left some gate ajar and that the cows are playing Harry Old Scratch with the young corn, the tomatoes, and such like. Whether or not cattle will go into a tobacco field and chew tobacco I do not know, but not until I am willing to risk a lynching will I try the experiment by leaving a rural gate unshut.

* * *

The more I see of countryfolks the more I

realize that the dwellers in cities haven't got a monopoly on all the hard horse—or rather mule—sense. A little observation ought to convince any individual that townfolks think with their mouths while country folks use their domes of thought for purposes of cogitation.

Lots of times when a farmer is looking as unsophisticated as a codfish his brain is turning double somersaults, and whole strings of ideas are buzzing around under his summit brush.

But the agriculturist is patient and long-suffering, and as a croaker, he is a mere tadpole compared to a city bullfrog. Only a few days ago one of the natives hereabouts sagely remarked to me that the city people try to work off all the second-class goods they have on the sod scrapers.

"It's this way," quoth the freckle-necked philosopher; "if you folks have got a second-class preacher or a second-class lawyer or a second-class doctor, why, what do you always do? Work him off on the farmer, of course. And if he is young and peart, but inexperienced, and you don't quite know whether the brat will make good or not, you let him cut his eye-teeth on us grangers. It's a case of 'try it on the dog' first every time, and you think we ain't wise to the fact. Maybe

we look like we ain't got any gumption—and maybe we haven't, too—but we do a powerful sight o' thinkin' sometimes. Now I ain't a-saying that every time we see that our hogs is about to die of cholera, we don't ship 'em to town for sale, as did a neighbor of mine, but even if we did, it would simply be a case of tit for tat. And as for the young persons that are turned loose on us Rubes, well, we don't let them bother us much, for their talkin' doesn't disturb our sleep in church any great shines, unless the flies and gnats are monstrous bad."

Now the truth about the countryfolks is that they don't let anything disturb them—leastwise, nothing except the cows and the gates—and right here in the vicinity of Frederick's Hall there apparently are dozens of people over seventy years old who seemingly have no idea of dying. The process requires too much exertion. These ancient critters don't work, and, what is more, they never did and never will. Like the rooster who instructs the pullets how to lay eggs, they can sit around and tell how things ought to be done.

One fine old gentleman whom I met strolls around at the age of eighty-three, and that, too, despite the fact that after surviving the horrors

of the Civil War he was ignominiously lamed by a fall from a mule. He asked me many, many questions about Richmond, which he has not visited for a decade or more, and wished me to tell him whether we had "a good dry-goods store" in the city.

In response to this query, I referred him to the Commander-in-Chief, although I also informed him, with a touch of sadness in my voice, that I was under the impression we did have a dry-goods store in Richmond.

This same venerable party innocently asked me if anybody had yet written a history of the Civil War. Think of the unconscious irony of his guileless question when every man who smelt pop-crackers or sulphur matches during the late unpleasantness has penned his reminiscences on the subject.

Poor, simple-minded, mule-maimed old warrior. He uncomplainingly left his native heath to do his part for the Lost Cause, and then, when it was all over, he went back to Arcadian Louisa and let the years drift by without ever looking at a calendar.

It has never occurred to him that he was part and parcel of that graycoated, mangy, dauntless

contingent which raised so much sand that history can never overlook it. And as for working off his own memoirs on the book-bombarded public—why, he would as soon think of doing a day's work.

Over four decades have gone galavanting down the corridors of time since this modest worthy stopped fighting Grant and the Confederate graybacks, and returned to aromatic, hospitable Louisa to fight chiggers and seedticks.

He has taken no notice of the lapse of years and asks every beardless boy he meets if he remembers Stonewall Jackson and the others who led in the killing. He even asked me if I still recalled Jeb Stuart, and in what command I had fought, just as if the whole world isn't ringing to-day with what I did in the Hanover Cavalry.

Bless this modest, hobbling old man, who has already been blessed by living in Louisa. He's "country," and no mistake, and being "country," he is instinctively and innately a gentleman.

If one sincerely wishes to meet Nature's noblemen and is willing to cut out laundered collars and cuffs, patent leather shoes and biled shirts, he can find what he wants in less than half an hour by beating the blackberry bushes and sassa-

fras growths in the neighborhood of Frederick's Hall.

But in so doing he should close all the gates behind him, for, as has been said, the Louisa cow, though toting fair in the matter of milk, is a she-devil in a garden spot.

THE QUEEN BEE AND HER DEAR MAN'S GARDEN

It was just thirty-one minutes and eighteen seconds after eight o'clock last Monday morning when the Commander-in-Chief tucked her knuckles under her gingham apron and sauntered out toward the little back porch which leads into our kitchen.

Sticking her neatly kalsomined nose, which had been whitened with face-powder only half an hour before, out into the open air, she gave one or two approving sniffs, indicative of extreme content, then she threaded her way back into the dining room, where Ink, the family cat, was feasting off residuary fish bones and the remnants of the breakfast food.

In the brief interim described, the carefully bleached nose of the Commander-in-Chief had smelt the approach of spring. The odor of the vernal season thrilled her with pleasure. And with the thrill came the hunger to dig—to puncture the bosom of Mother Earth.

Some primordial instinct, recalling the good old

days when women tilled the soil while the warrior men hunted, said to the energetic housewife, "Go out and scrape around in the dirt."

And so the Commander-in-Chief prepared to dig.

Tripping to the box of family cutlery, she selected therefrom the buckhorn carving-knife, wherewith I am expected to dissect the semi-monthly turkeys that grace our table.

No true women would dig with anything more practical or less expensive than a three-dollar carving-knife. Unlike men, they are no respecters of steel. Were razors built on a slightly different plan, the Commander-in-Chief would have selected one of my whisker-eradicators for her horticultural pursuits. But, under the circumstances, she was satisfied with the carving-knife.

As has been explained, she wanted the earth—not with a fence around it, as is usually the case, but in tablespoonful lots.

* * *

It was the back yard which aroused her energies, for in this limited territory she saw a picture which grated on her nerves, and made her

Amazonian soul shriek out in indignation at the disorders prevailing on the premises.

Last summer, when the perspiring dog-star was frisking unlicensed through the heavens, we had a glorious flower-garden in this same back yard, but autumn and winter, combined with the cook, the children, and the garbage barrel, had made the place more unsavory than a city dump.

The situation, too, was greatly ramified by the clothes-lines, which make locomotion perilous at night and perpetually present the most dangerous of traps for unsuspecting chins or unwary noses.

Mingling with the shriveled stalks of the black-eyed Susans were several empty shoe-polish bottles, while in the northwest corner of the fence, where the hollyhocks rioted all summer in crimson, pink, and white, was a goodly supply of old bones secreted by the neighborhood pups, who oft come hither o' nights.

Hard by—a dreary conglomeration of gray and drab and brown—was the ramshackle lattice work designed to throw a curtain over the garbage barrel, and to ornament that aromatic receptacle in the days when the birds and mosquitoes sing and the house-flies bite. Time was when the morning glories and the honeysuckle had done what they

could to obliterate this eyesore, but last Monday all their grandeur had departed save a few crumbling vines which now hung with a skeleton clutch to their wonted resting-places.

All these things were swept in a second by the eagle eye of the woman armed with the carving-knife. Poetry was in her soul, despite the tomato cans which gleamed where erst grew the vermilion nasturtiums. Spring, too, was singing in her ears notwithstanding the dismantled soap-box that lay wrecked where formerly blossomed the redolent beves of Sweet Williams. A hundred perfumes, in imagination, were coming to her kalsomined nose from the little tangle where only a few months ago wanted the sweet peas, the tea roses, the lilac and the old-time pinks, and where more recently the cook had thrown one of her discarded, lop-sided shoes.

So the Commander-in-Chief ducked under the clothes-lines, and flourishing her blade of pure Damascus steel, prepared to do business with the earth. Little that was green presented itself to her searching gaze. Nearly all that met her vision was somber and crumbling and blighted, and there was no superfluity of fragrance.

"Everything as dead as a door-nail," sighed the

good woman, "and so dreary-looking that it takes all the faith I've got to believe in the floral resurrection."

* * *

But just then, casting her roving eye to the base of the fence below the place where fluttered my trusty polka-dot hosiery on the clothes-line, she espied a little patch of delicate, tender emerald.

It was my mint-bed, just preparing to open up the season!

Great was the delight of the Commander-in-Chief when she first saw this evidence of spring, for she suspected not what was the hardy plant which thus ventured to brave belated snows and treacherous frosts.

"Oh, you plucky little dear," passionately exclaimed the heavily-armed dame, while, like a duck on a June-bug, she swooped down on an almost imperceptible sprig of green. "How I hope the sun will make you grow big and strong, and help you to spread until you carpet this whole yard."

Then she smelt the mint and snorted.

In a second, she was waving the carving-knife with a succession of wild flourishes which convinced me, peeping chucklingly through the

kitchen window, that had I been five yards nearer, my scalp would have been detached from my dome of thought quicker than it takes to tell of this episode.

"Plague if this ain't enough to make any woman hopping mad," I heard her exclaim. "Drat that man and his tricks, anyhow! Here I've spent sixty-nine cents writing to seed stores that advertise in the backs of magazines, and digging and scratching in this yard for months, and now there ain't a leaf to show for it except this nasty stuff. I'm that aggravated I could fight."

And as she ducked back and forth under the clothes-lines, she got still madder and madder, for a closer inspection revealed the fact that the mint was coming up in all directions until it looked as if the whole yard would be alive with it.

* * *

"Just like him," I heard her say wrathfully, "just like him! I couldn't so much as get him to dig a thimbleful of dirt here last summer until he came in one day with a sprig of mint and asked to be allowed to plant it. He said he never expected to raise enough to use in his toddies—in fact, didn't drink except when he had colds—but thought it would smell so sweet and countrylike

when the wind blew up it. And to think I didn't have the gumption to understand his tricks and to see through his remarkable activity after that, when he came out here every evening and dug and dug until I thought he'd discovered a gold mine under the red clay.

"If I don't watch him every minute of my life," added the aggrieved one reflectively, "he'll fool me to death. The next thing I know he'll be planting the front yard in tobacco, or raising corn to be used in a distillery, which somehow or other he'll manage to establish in our cellar. That man can look more guileless when he's goosing me than any five-year-old child, and whenever his innocence particularly impresses me, I know that I ought to sit up nights watching him.

"But one thing is certain"—here the voice showed great energy—"this mint and I can't stay on the same premises. I'd rather have Jimson-weeds and poke-berry bushes growing here than see this stuff flaunting itself under my nose and telling me every day how I've been fooled."

And with that she made one fell swoop with the carving-knife and sent the dust a-flying around her like a Sahara simoom. After that, not feeling sure that she had done her deadly work,

she stamped on everything green in sight.

At this juncture old Nick got so strong in me that I couldn't help poking my head out the window and venturing the query, "What's up? Got chilblains or St. Vitus's dance?"

But she was too proud and haughty to own up to what she thought would be an admission of my successful cunning, so she merely replied: "Not much—I was merely trying to kick a hole through to China, so you could slip in and buy me that Canton dinner set you've been promising me for the last ten years."

HANGING PICTURES

A MAN doesn't become a matrimonial graduate in a day. He may rock a cradle six nights out of seven and even learn to administer mutton-suet to his croupy offspring, but these accomplishments alone do not entitle him to a diploma. Nor does a knowledge of feminine apparel and the ability to discriminate between an overskirt and an underskirt entitle him to the proper credentials. He must know and experience even more. Not until he has hung pictures for his wife can he feel that he has crossed the fiery sands and earned the well-deserved laurels which are said to come to the lot of dutiful husbands.

Hanging pictures is like bicycle riding. It looks absurdly easy until you try it, and when you finally make the effort, somebody is mighty apt to get hurt. And the chances are that you will be the injured individual.

When you enter a room and see the chromos flaunting their gaudy colors from the walls, you think it was but the work of a minute to arrange them in the order in which they present them-

selves to your eye. That is because you never tried to do the thing yourself. If you had, you wouldn't stop to think about the artistic effects. You would merely spend all your time sympathizing with the man who accomplished the feat.

When your wife gets the house-cleaning mania on her, you either go off and commit suicide at once—a most advisable thing to do—or you take it into your head that you yourself would like to do some helpfully good, hard work which requires muscle and strength. When you tender her your services—you never do it but once, by the way,—she will decline your offer to lay the carpets and pull up the tacks but request you to hang the pictures. At first you think you are not “toting fair” with her—that you are not doing your share of the drudgery—but later on you change your opinion.

* * *

When you start on the job, you are surprised to find that the good woman keeps the step-ladder in the third story, whereas the pictures are to be hung on the ground floor. And then again, when you go into the third story you are still more amazed to find how much a step-ladder weighs and how unmanageable and obstreperous

the cuss-take-it thing can be. By the time you get it down-stairs you conclude that it would be absurd to attempt further operations until you remove your coat and your cuffs and your collar and your cravat and your vest and roll up your pants and your shirt-sleeves.

Then, just as you start in to work, you remember that it is necessary to have a hammer in hanging pictures. The hammer is in the packing-room and investigation proves that the lady of the house has hidden it under three feather mattresses and four broken chairs. You burrow among these dusty relics and finally draw forth the coveted implement. "Now for business," you say, but on reaching the august presence of the presiding female you are astonished to hear her ask, "Where are the nails?" And then you remember that nails also are necessary in the hanging of pictures. These articles, along with a screw-driver, several curtain hooks, a file, and an iron ice-pick are kept in a small wooden box in the pantry and this wooden box has, somehow or other, come into too close contact with the lard barrel. But you get the nails and also much of the lard. By this time you remark how hot the weather is, considering the season of the year.

Your only consolation is that now you can jump right into the midst of your duties and show your wife the superb superiority of your sex.

* * *

The first thing to do is to decide where Picture No. 1 is to be hung. Your wife puts her head on one side like an owl, squints through one eye, then points to the place over the china-press. Removing a hairpin from her mouth and smacking at one of the children for kicking the baby, she says, "Suppose you start here."

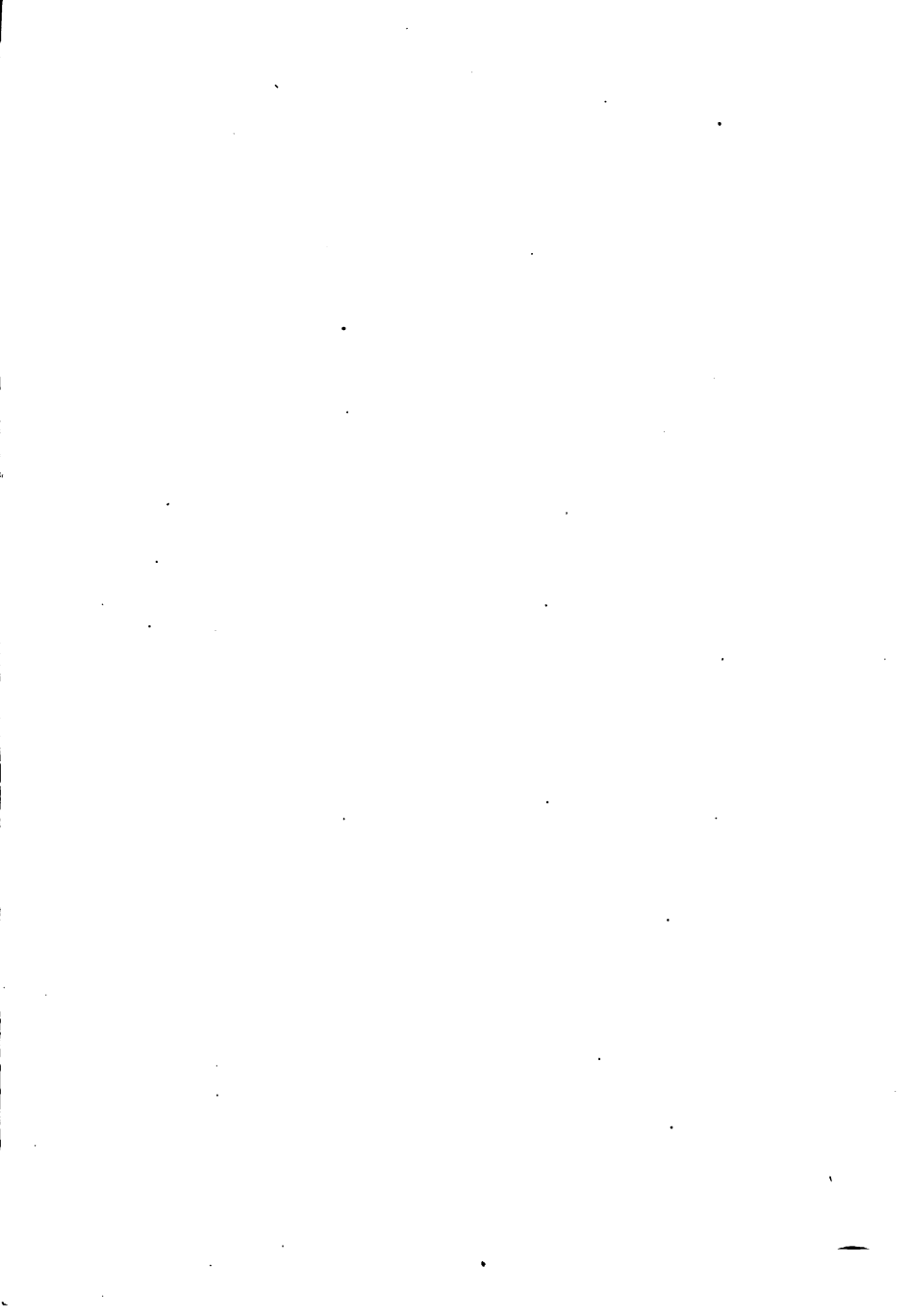
"All right," you say, but when you make the start you find it is all wrong. Your first duty is to steer the step-ladder under the chandelier and between the tea table full of after dinner coffee cups and the Chinese vase on the most exposed corner of the mantel-piece. To do this successfully is alone worth a celestial crown. Next the ladder is to be put in place so that it will not strike the china-press but will nevertheless allow you to stand on the top piece and swing the hammer. You are surprised to find how hot and dusty a ceiling can be and still more astonished to learn how difficult it is to make measurements with the naked eye on that portion of the wall to which the picture is assigned.

At last, with a mighty falling of plastering, you drive in a nail, and your wife, after censuring you for mutilating the wall-paper, hands up the picture to you. Joyously you hang it, but lo! the wire is so long that the picture drags the floor. "Take it off and fix the string," suggests the feminine supervisor. And to do this you have to climb down the ladder at imminent risk of being hurled into eternity.

Good, you've got it all hunkey now, and up the ladder you climb, as cheerful a monkey as ever skinned up a disagreeable altitude. Triumphantlly you hang the chromo again. This time it is only four inches from the ceiling and looks like one pea in a bowl of soup. Now you are mad and blame your wife for it. And she is very impatient about your lack of judgment, too. You both say disagreeable things, but finally you consent to make another effort at the wire. At last you get it the right length. But great is your disgust on finding that one end of the picture hangs up higher than the other one. You lower the higher end and then the lower end gets higher, while your wife comfortably reposing in the rocking-chair below is full of suggestions.

Men have been known to hang pictures without loss of life, but what I have described is merely one-fortieth part of the process. Remember there are many rooms in houses and many pictures in each room. I wouldn't be at all surprised to learn that Job hung pictures for his wife.

THE END





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